
Results
MPA Alumni Survey
May 2013

MPA Program
Dept. of Political Science, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan 48309

Key Findings:

- Most of those responding (55%) describe career advancement as their motivation for pursuing the MPA. More than three-quarters (77%) believe the degree gave them marketability. Forty percent indicate that it led to a new job title, and 36% to a higher salary. More than one quarter (26%) claim the MPA led to a big break or large career step, and 17% say it resulted in a major shift to a new type of organization.
- The MPA reportedly increases one's commitment to public service. Seven of ten alumni say that their commitment was strong or very strong at their time of entry to the program; that proportion approaches nine of ten by graduation.
- Consistent with our 2008 findings, respondents cite small class sizes, the full-time faculty, and the curriculum as the program's top three strengths.
- Most respondents (56%) say they pursued a concentration and 93% say they completed it. The vast majority found having done so to be somewhat (47%) or very (37%) useful to their career.
- With respect to the capstones, nearly two-thirds (63%) report doing a 690 project. Yet 62% of those completing an internship found it very useful.
- We were able to use this survey to introduce alumni to our new set of core competencies, engaging in a bit of retrofitting of their experiences in the MPA program to our new curricular configuration. Respondents report feeling most proficient, both at time of admission and at time of graduation, with respect to Competency #2 ("To participate and contribute to the public and non-profit management process") and Competency #5 ("To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and dynamic workforce and citizenry.")
- A combined 80% strongly/agree that the training they received in the OU MPA program is useful in their current position. 77% say they would pursue the OU MPA degree if they had it to do over, and 83% strongly/agree that they would recommend the program to any person seeking a career in public or nonprofit management.

Background & Purpose

An alumni survey is part of the MPA program's assessment protocol. Given the various costs involved, we do these infrequently and irregularly – our last survey was conducted in 2008, i.e., one year longer than the three year cycle promised the UAC via our approved plan.

We took this on as a class project in PA 620 (Quantitative Techniques) during the Winter 2013 term. The obvious synergies: (a) students were able to participate from beginning to end in a practical exercise employing various useful (and salable) skills, (b) we would generate "real" data on a familiar topic which could be used to learn statistical and software applications, while (c) accomplishing a useful task for the program.

The purpose of the exercise is to add systematic input from alumni to the diverse mix of data we use to evaluate ourselves. This new snapshot is particularly timely given that we are on the cusp of a self-study year, with a reaccreditation visit scheduled for the year after.

Methodology

The shape of our MPA alumni database determined our approach. Our main file contains the last, best e-mail address we have for 254 alums – thereby lending itself to the use of electronic solicitation. We thus utilized the university's SurveyMonkey account. A secondary file contains another 95 alumni on whom we have only street addresses, i.e., not e-mail links.

Past practice is to do an initial mailing and two follow-ups, i.e., three waves total tracked via ID number. We did that here for the electronic application: Ms. Rossi e-mailed a link to our instrument and then followed up twice within approximately two-week intervals. For the balance we used snail mail. The return from the second wave was so weak, however, we stopped there in order to save the cost of additional postage. The diagnostics of the return are thus as follows:

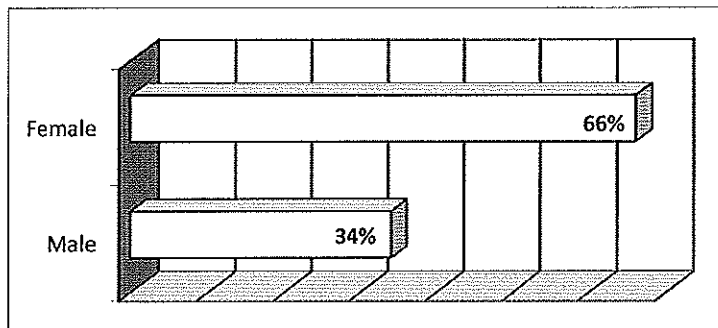
	Sent	Undeliverable	Started/Completed	Response rate
Via SurveyMonkey	254	38	93	43%
Via USPS	95	11	25	30%
Total	349	49	118	39%

We used the '08 instrument as our starting point and began revising it during our first class session in January. Although there is overlap, this edition was notably different: several questions were deleted, revised, or replaced. A copy is appended to this report.

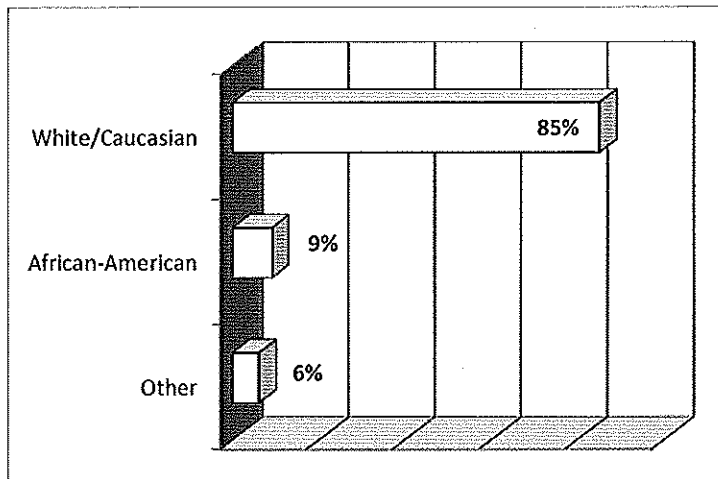
SurveyMonkey tabulates results automatically. Although it was too late in the term for 620 students to code and clean the paper surveys, they were able to review the electronic results, including comparing them to those of the 2008 iteration where possible.

The term having ended in April, Prof. Piskulich completed the coding and data analysis compiled in this report.

Respondent Demographics

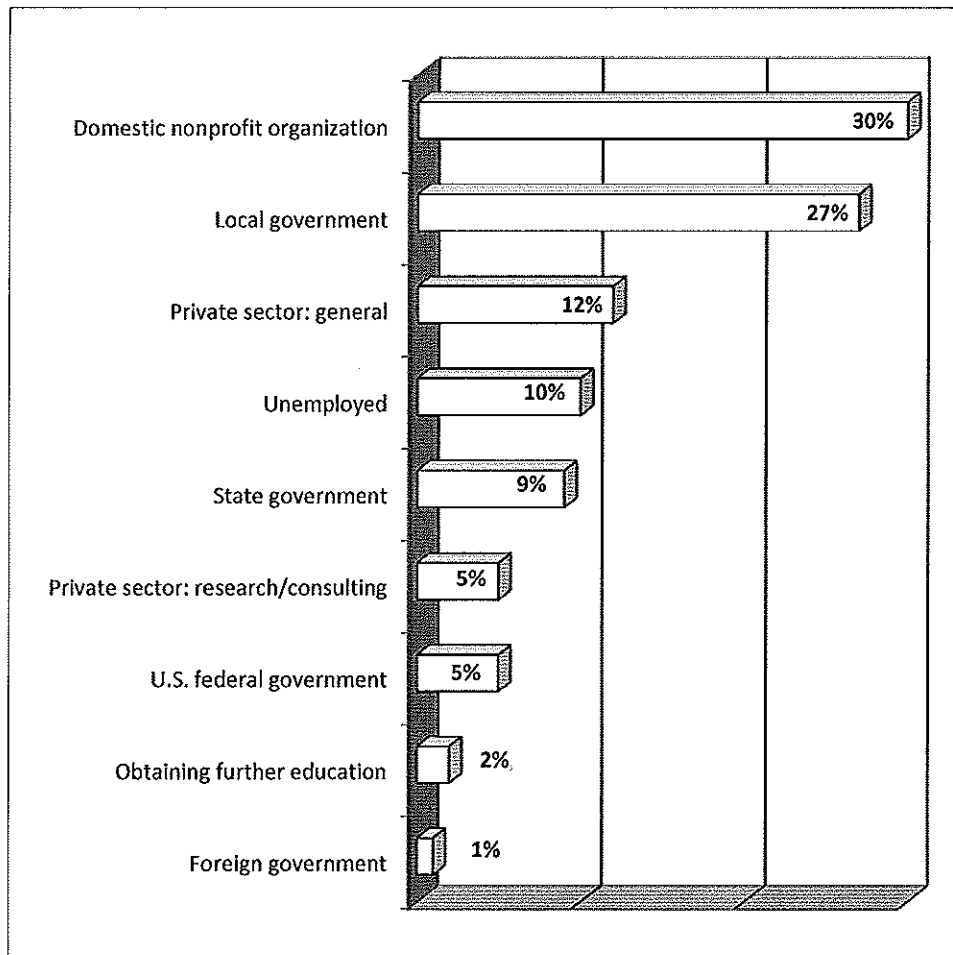


(n=110)



(n=107)

Current Employment Status



(n=103)

Respondent Job Title, Employer

Education

Asst Dir for Undergrad Admissions, OU
 Asst Prog Dir, Oakland Schools
 Community Administrator, MSU College of Human Medicine
 Development Project Manager, OU
 Dir, MI DARPA Matching Funds Program/Asst Dir of SmartZone, OU
 Director of Grants, Dev, & Legal Svcs, Lenawee ISD
 Director of University Relations, MCC
 Donor Relations & Stewardship Coordinator, OU
 Executive Director, OU AAUP
 Finance & Operations, OU
 Manager, MCC
 Medical student
 MPA Program Coordinator, OU
 Office Director, Student Life, OCC
 PhD candidate, WMU
 Program Asst, OU
 Provost, Gateway Technical College
 Research Analyst, OU
 Safety & Security Supervisor, Detroit Country Day School
 Senior Procurement Agent, University of Michigan

Local Government

Asst City Manager, City of Auburn Hills
 Asst City Manager/Deputy City Clerk, City of Eastpointe
 Asst to the City Administrator/DDA Exec Dir, City of Lathrup Village
 City Manager, City of Auburn Hills
 City Manager, City of Ludington
 City Manager, City of South Lyon
 County Administrator, Livingston County
 Deputy City Clerk, City of Clawson
 Deputy Director of Community Development, City of Novi
 Director of Community Development/Asst to the EM, City of Pontiac
 Director of Elections, Oakland County
 Director of Public Safety, Greenville, MI
 Election Specialist, City of Birmingham
 Executive Asst, Oakland Twp
 Health Educator, Oakland County Health Division
 HR Director, Clinton Twp
 Intern to the City Manager, City of Troy
 Management Asst, City of Phoenix
 Manager, Fiscal Services, Oakland County
 MIS & Special Projects Coordinator, Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Dev Bd
 Police Officer
 Pre Trial Investigator, Oakland County Community Corrections
 Public Health Nutritionist, Oakland County Health Division
 Service Director, Macomb County HR & Labor Relations
 Treasurer, Oxford Twp
 Web/IT Admin Asst, Springfield Twp.

Nonprofit Organization

Admin Staff, Micdeleton Place Foundation
 Asst Director, Annual Giving, Cranbrook Schools
 Clinical Application Coordinator, MPRO-Michigan's QIO
 Communications Specialist, BCBSM
 Development Director, ALS of Michigan, Inc.
 Director of Operations, The North Carolina Arboretum
 Executive Director, Historical Society US District Court, Eastern Dist of MI
 Govt Affairs Representative, Federal Managers Assn
 Health Care Analyst, BCBSM
 Operations Mgr. SE MI Beacon Community
 Program Manager, Neighborhood Service Organization
 Project Coordinator, MPRO
 Specialist, American Cancer Society
 Sponsorship Director, Michigan Senior Olympics
 Sr Dir of Philanthropy, Pacific Northwest College of Art

Private Sector

Business Analyst, Ford Motor Company
 Business Manager, Great Lakes Psychology Group
 Consultant, Rhode Solutions
 Director of Contracting, NME3
 Director of Info Tech, EarthSoft, Inc.
 Executive VP, Private Land Development Co.
 Loan Processor, Mid-Way FCU
 Marketing & Technology Coordinator, Center LLC
 Paralegal, Deneweth, Dugan & Parfitt, P.C.
 Senior Associate, Berkeley Research Group

State Government

Asst Dir of NYS Procurement, NYS Office of General Services
 Chief of Staff, State of Michigan
 Policy Analyst, Michigan Senate
 Probation Officer, Michigan Dept of Corrections
 Services Specialist, Michigan Dept of Human Services

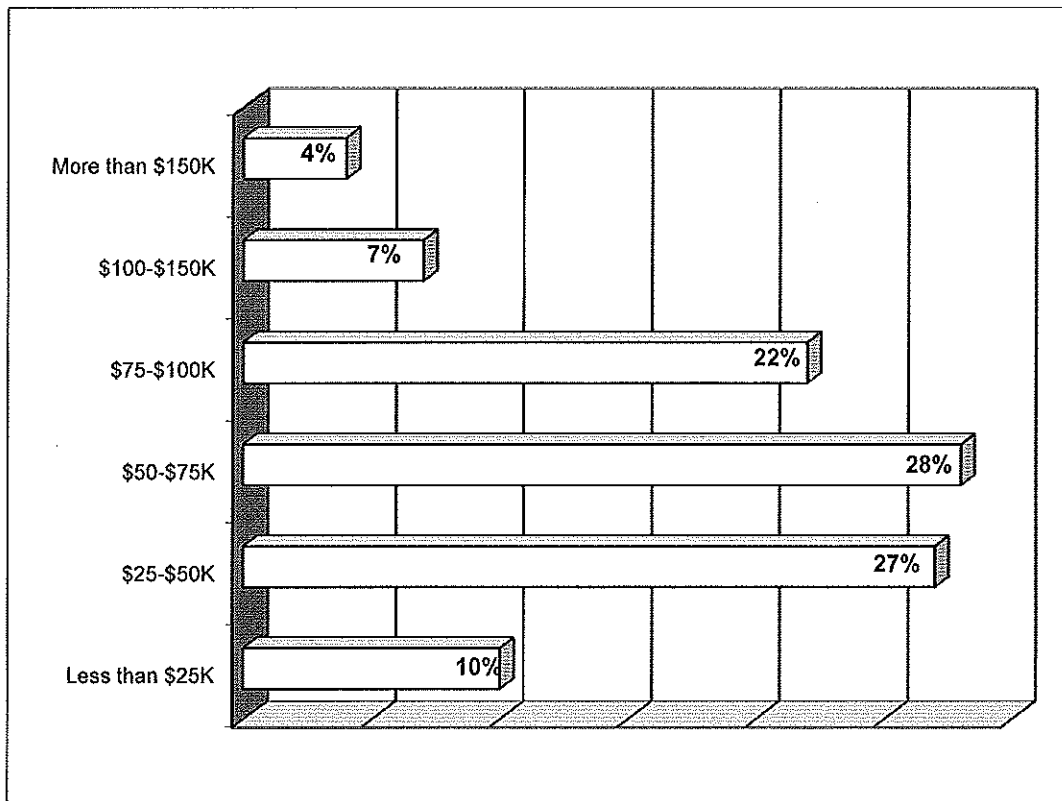
Federal Government

Asst District Mgr, SSA
 Claims Rep, SSA
 Medical Support Asst, Dept of Veterans Affairs
 Program Management Office USAF
 Space & Resources Manager, US Bankruptcy Court

Other

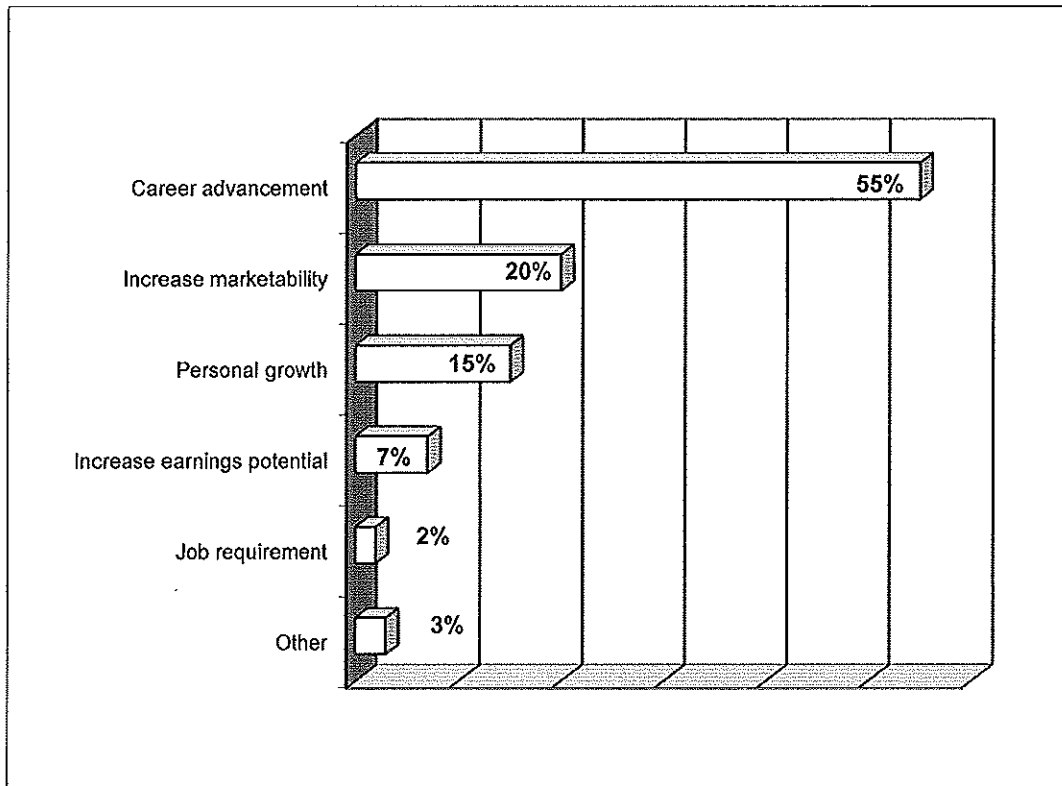
Project Coordinator, Community College of Qatar

In which salary range does your current position fall?



(n=97)

Which best describes your motivation for pursuing the MPA degree?



(n=117)

	2013	2008
Career advancement	55%	59%
Increase marketability	20%	18%
Personal growth	15%	12%
Increase earnings potential	7%	7%
Job requirement	2%	2%
Other	3%	1%

How would you rate your commitment to public service?

	n	Very Weak	Weak	Neutral	Strong	Very Strong
At entry:	117	3%	8%	20%	36%	34%
At graduation:	118	1%	1%	11%	39%	48%
Today:	116	3%	3%	16%	36%	41%

Very/strong 2013	Very/strong 2008
70%	73%
87%	88%
77%	82%

2008
40%
4%
14%
16%

34% report stronger commitment at graduation relative to entry

0% report weaker commitment at graduation relative to entry

9% report stronger commitment today relative to graduation

23% report weaker commitment today relative to graduation

Affect for the MPA Program

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	<i>n</i>					
2013	Looking back, I think the OU MPA program prepared me for my professional career	14%	65%	11%	7%	3%
		118				
2008	Looking back, I think the OU MPA program prepared me well for my professional career	22%	65%	8%	4%	2%
		167				
2013	I would recommend the OU MPA program to any person seeking a career in public or nonprofit management	37%	46%	9%	7%	1%
		118				
2008		45%	48%	5%	1%	1%
		167				

How proficient would you say you felt in each of these competencies....

...at the time of your admission to the MPA program?

	Not at all proficient	Somewhat proficient	Very proficient	Uncertain
To lead and manage in public or non-profit governance	12%	52%	36%	-
To participate in and contribute to the public and non-profit management process	4%	44%	53%	-
To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	7%	55%	38%	-
To articulate and apply a public service perspective	10%	52%	38%	1%
To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and dynamic workforce and citizenry	2%	37%	60%	2%

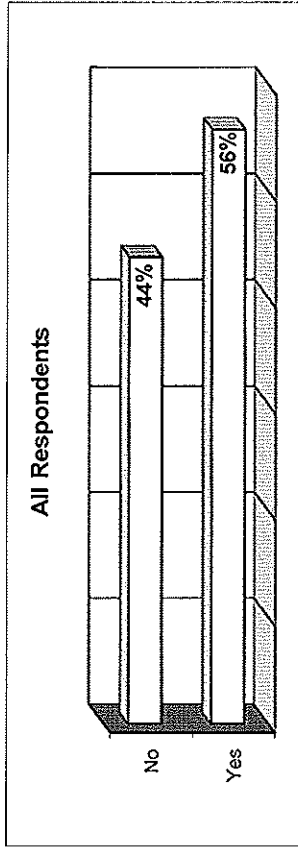
(n=114)

...at graduation, based upon what you learned in the MPA program?

	Not at all proficient	Somewhat proficient	Very proficient	Uncertain
To lead and manage in public or non-profit governance	1%	28%	71%	-
To participate in and contribute to the public and non-profit management process	-	11%	88%	2%
To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	-	20%	78%	2%
To articulate and apply a public service perspective	1%	20%	78%	2%
To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and dynamic workforce and citizenry	1%	10%	87%	3%

(n=113)

Did you pursue a concentration in the MPA program?

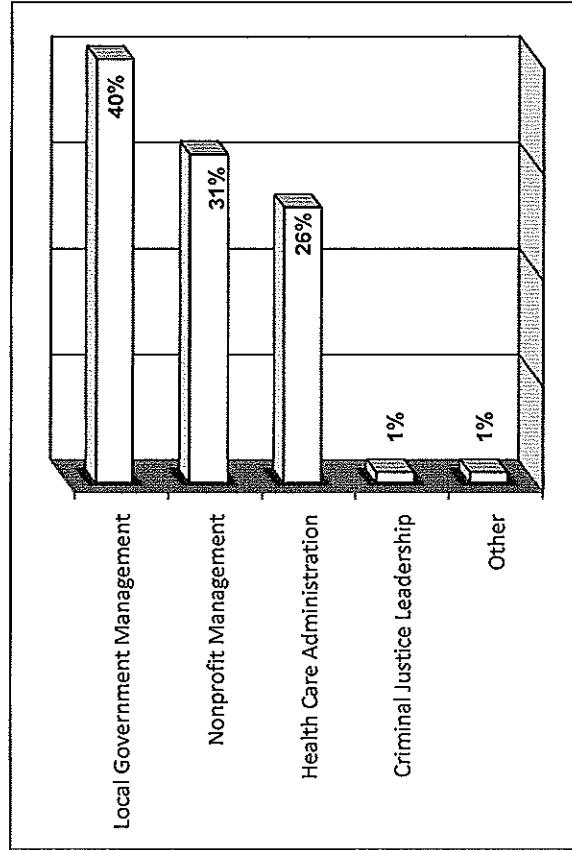


(n=114)

2008	
All respondents	
No	53%
Yes	47%
Grads since 1989*	
No	45%
Yes	55%

*yr of first concentration

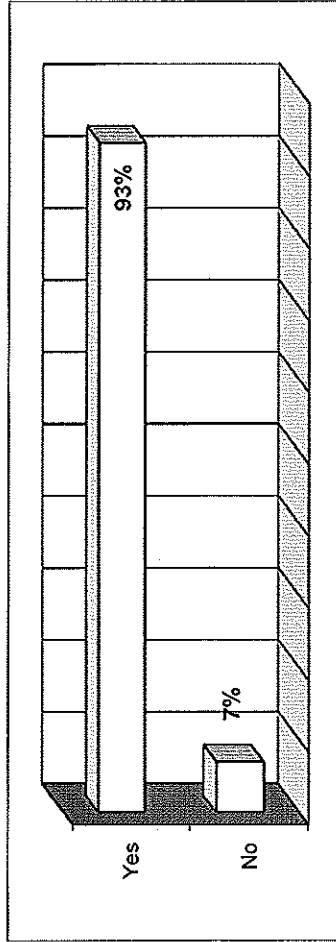
If Yes, which one?



(n=62)

2008	
LGM	40%
HCA	27%
NPM	18%
HRM	13%
CJL	1%

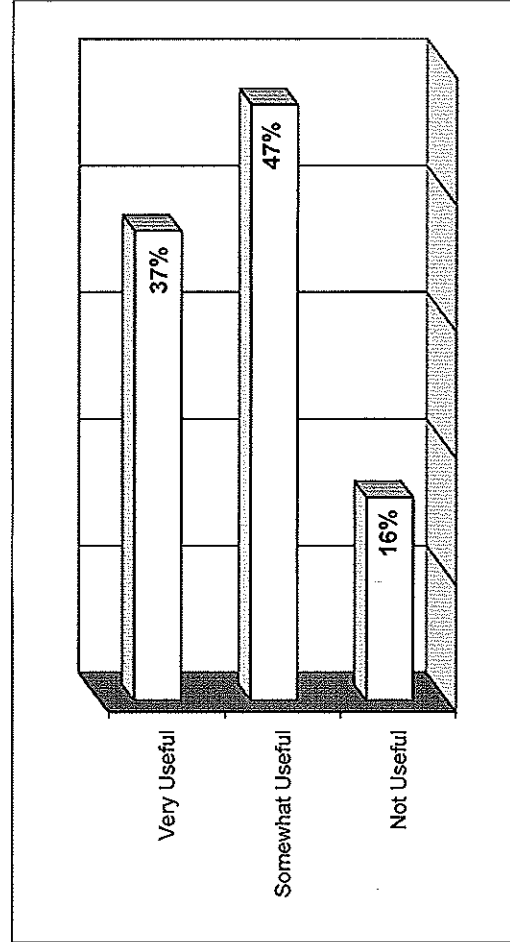
Did you complete this concentration?



(n=62)

2008	
No	16%
Yes	84%

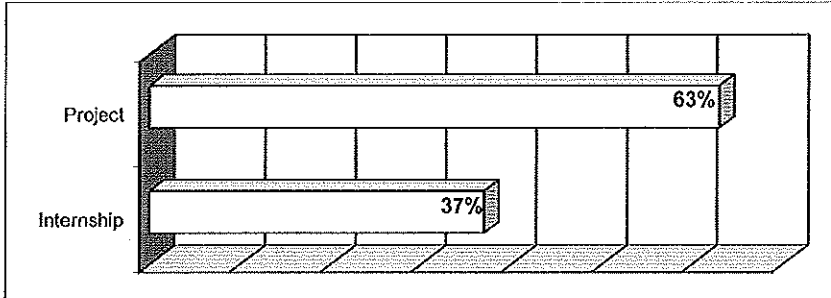
If Yes, how useful has this concentration been to your career?



(n=62)

2008	
Very	46%
Somewhat	44%
Not	10%

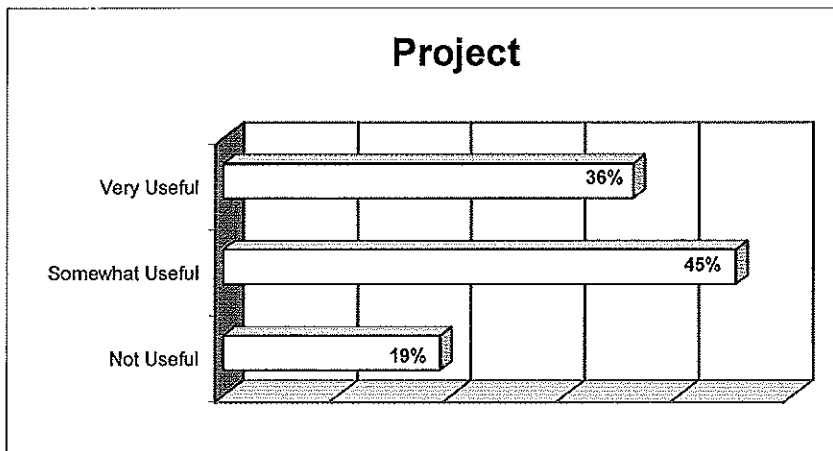
Which capstone requirement did you complete?



(n=109)

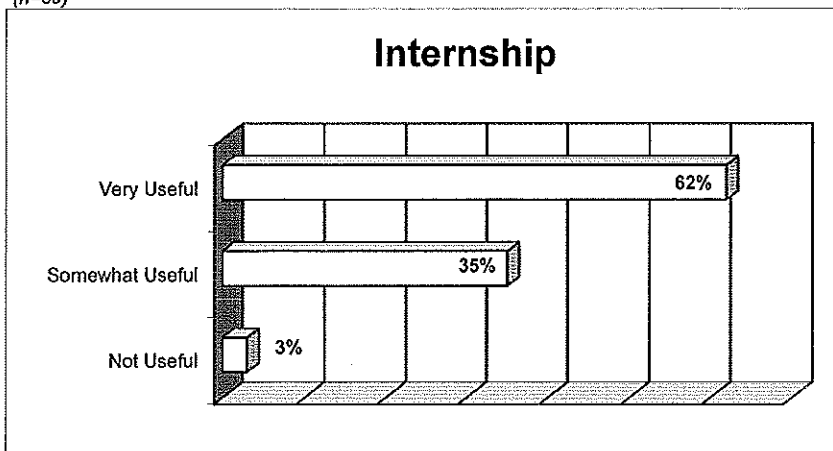
2008	
Project	74%
Internship	26%

How would you rate the usefulness of this project or internship to your MPA training?



(n=69)

2008	
Very	47%
Somewhat	45%
Not	9%



(n=40)

2008	
Very	62%
Somewhat	26%
Not	12%

How useful to your career would you consider the following prerequisite courses?

2013

	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	N/A
Statistics	50%	29%	18%	3%
Accounting	49%	29%	21%	2%
Macroeconomics	32%	39%	25%	4%

(n=111)

2008

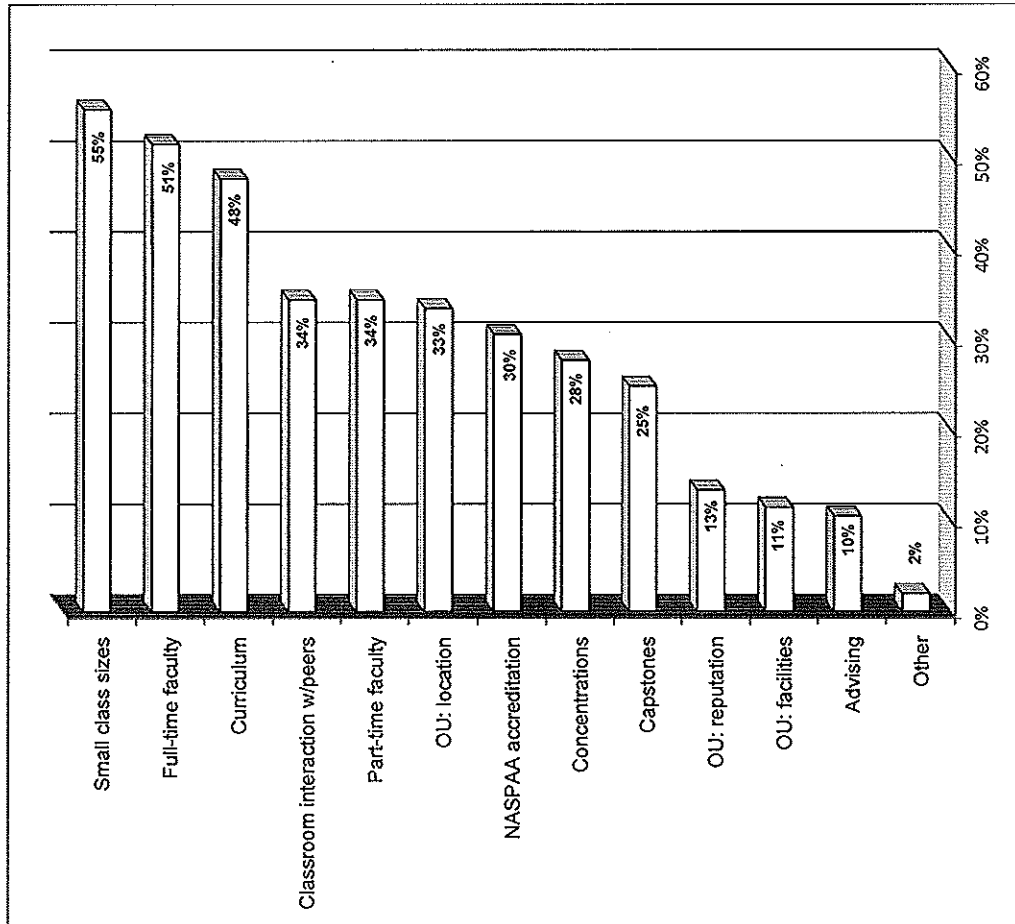
	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	N/A
Statistics	45%	40%	11%	3%
Accounting	44%	35%	18%	3%
Macroeconomics	28%	45%	21%	7%

(n=165)

Is there another topic you wish you could have studied while enrolled in the OU MPA program, but that was not available to you?

- Labor/managing public employees = 4
- Local government = 3
- Public speaking/communication = 2
- Criminal justice = 2 *(now available)*
- Local govt finance and accounting = 2 *(now available)*
- Higher ed leadership = 2
- Economic development *(now available)*
- Fundraising and development *(now available)*
- City planning
- Leadership & decision making skills
- Urban planning and public policy
- Diversity
- Health care – additional courses
- Nonprofit courses: acctg, business mgt, legal aspects, advanced grantwriting
- Grantwriting
- Business/accounting
- Applied statistics – more analytical courses
- Governance vs. government
- Annual fund, specialized fundraising
- Contract/grants mgt
- Developing “business plans” within a nonprofit environment
- International development/admin
- Basic business practices
- Electives in other master’s programs
- Policy/change
- Business writing

Which of the following components of the OU MPA program would you consider its top three strengths?



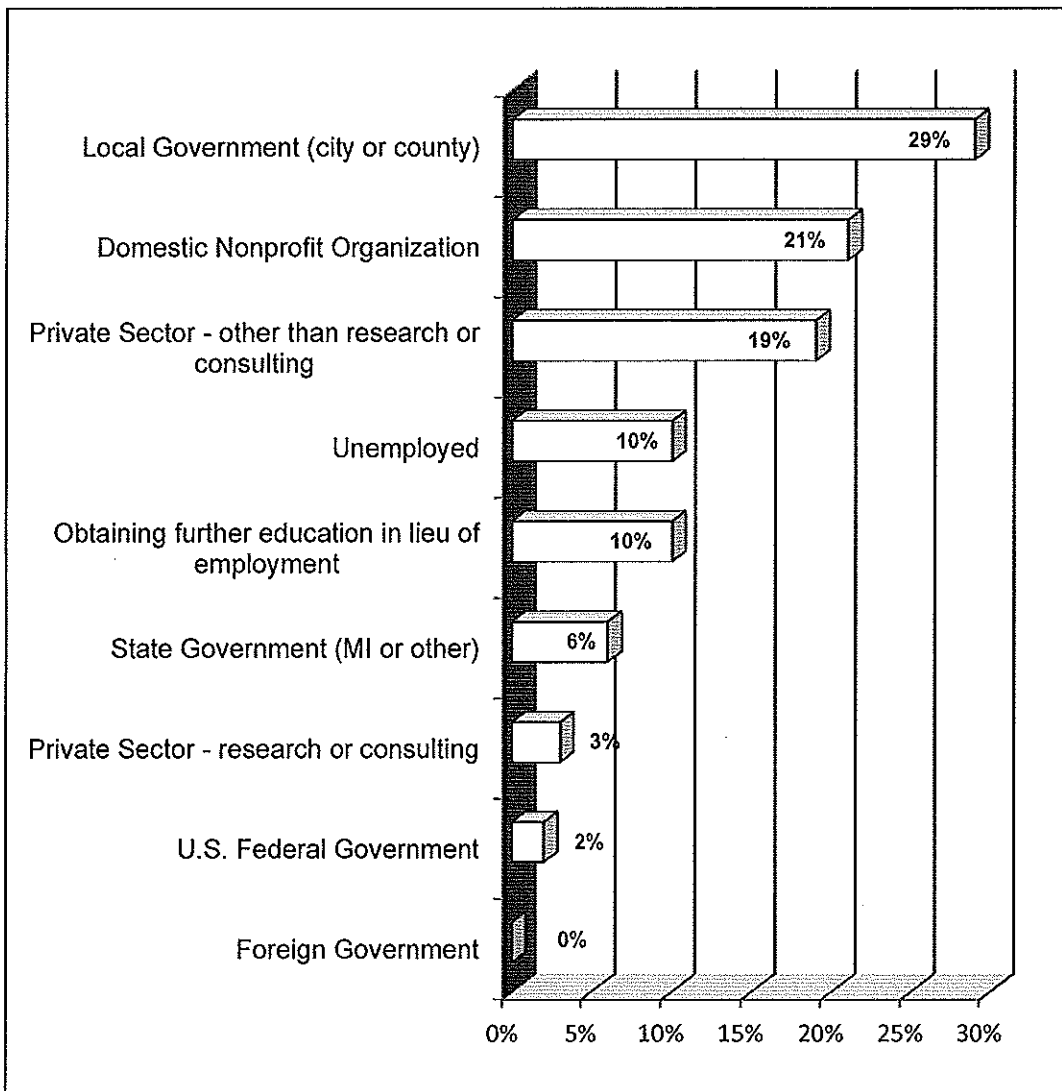
(n=105)

2008

Small class sizes	58%
Curriculum	49%
Full-time faculty	41%
Classroom interaction w/peers	40%
OU: location	25%
Part-time faculty	20%
NASPAA accreditation	19%
Capstones	16%
Concentrations	14%
OU: reputation	11%
Other	4%
OU: facilities	2%
Advising	n/a

(n=162)

What was your employment status at the time you entered the MPA program?



(n=110)

How many years of MPA-related professional experience had you accrued by the time you entered the MPA program?

	2013	2008
None	33%	32%
1-2 years	21%	21%
3-5 years	22%	20%
6-10 years	16%	13%
11-20 years	6%	12%
More than 20 years	2%	2%
<i>mean</i>	3.9	4.6
<i>median</i>	2	2
<i>mode</i>	0	0
<i>stdev</i>	5.4	5.8
<i>n</i>	108	164

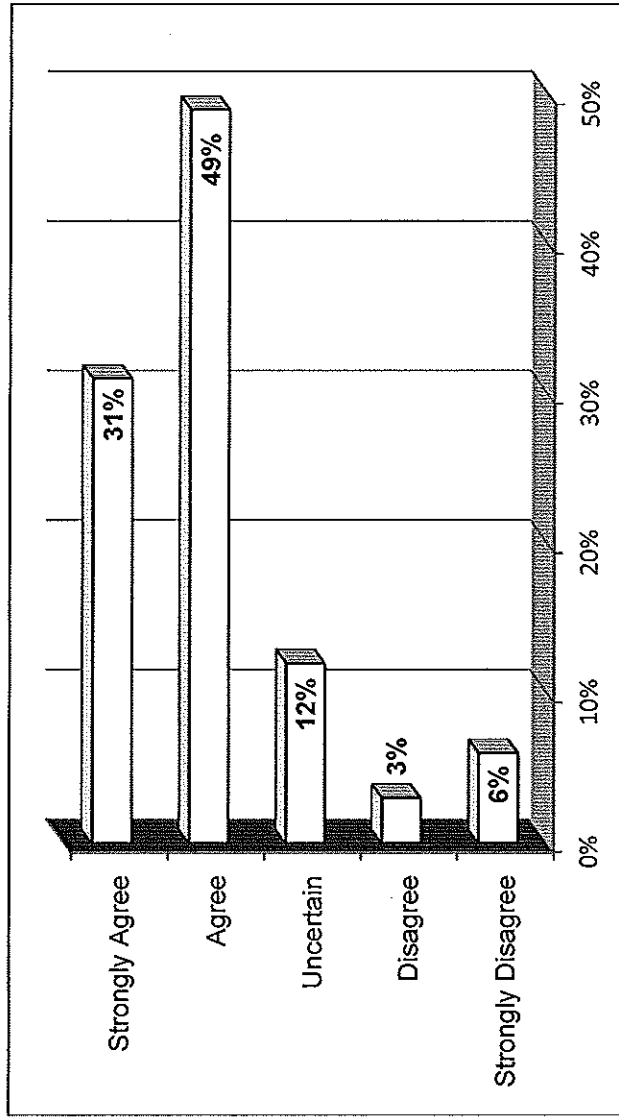
Which of the following best describes your first job after completing the OU MPA program?

	2013	2008
Did not change jobs	31%	46%
A big break or large step in my career	26%	27%
A major shift to a new type of organization	17%	15%
A natural progression from my previous job to a new position	13%	10%
A move made to accommodate family demands	5%	4%
A step backward from my previous job	4%	-
<i>Other</i>	3%	6%
Pursued further education	1%	4%
A temporary detour in an otherwise smooth career path	1%	1%
	(n=112)	(n=166)

Which functions are part of your current job responsibilities?

	2013	2008
Program planning/development	68%	58%
Leadership	66%	n/a
Program implementation	62%	54%
Budgeting	59%	53%
Program evaluation	59%	52%
Supervision of subordinates	56%	64%
Administrative support	43%	34%
Contract management/oversight	40%	38%
Agency/executive management	35%	37%
Program marketing	35%	35%
Human resources management	32%	41%
Information systems management	30%	26%
Fundraising/development	23%	22%
Direct service provision	18%	31%
Lobbying/legislative liaison	12%	12%
	(n=99)	(n=145)

I would say the training I received in the OU MPA program is useful in my current position



(n=104)

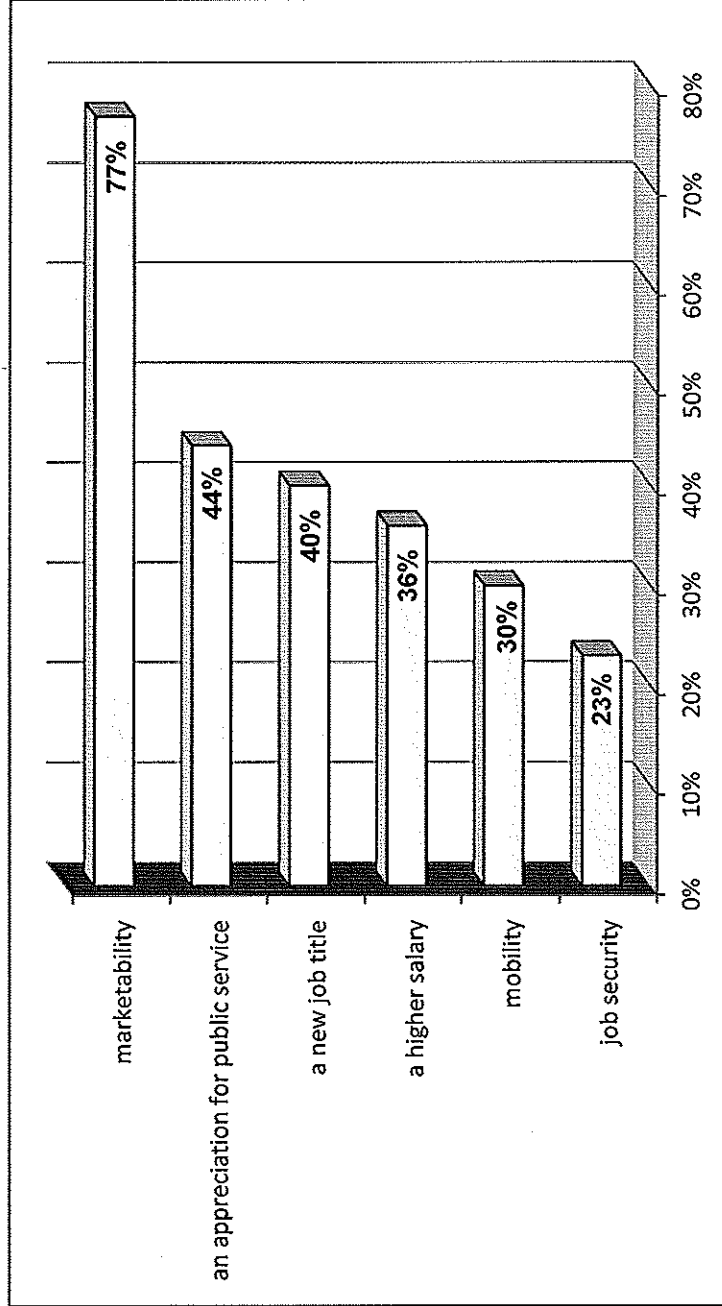
Considering your career since earning the MPA degree, how important to your success would you consider each of the following factors?

2013

2008

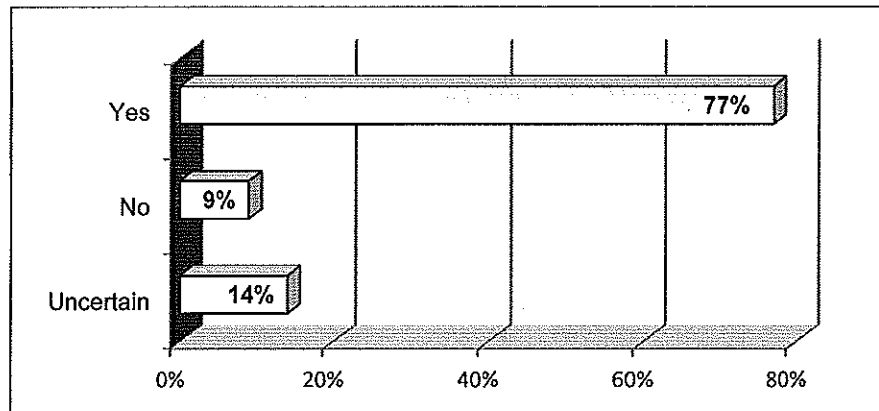
	2013					2008				
	<i>n</i>	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Uncertain	<i>n</i>	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Uncertain
Hard work/diligence/persistence	109	88%	9%	3%	-	159	89%	9%	2%	-
Intelligence/competence	109	83%	17%	1%	-	159	81%	18%	1%	-
Undergraduate education	108	50%	43%	7%	-	161	64%	30%	6%	-
MPA education	109	51%	42%	7%	-	162	59%	33%	8%	-
MPA education, concentration	103	21%	40%	27%	12%	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Networking/personal contacts	109	55%	34%	10%	1%	158	56%	30%	13%	1%
Other degrees/training	104	37%	41%	12%	11%	142	37%	42%	15%	6%
Opportunity/luck	104	47%	40%	9%	4%	153	29%	54%	14%	-

In retrospect, the MPA degree gave me:



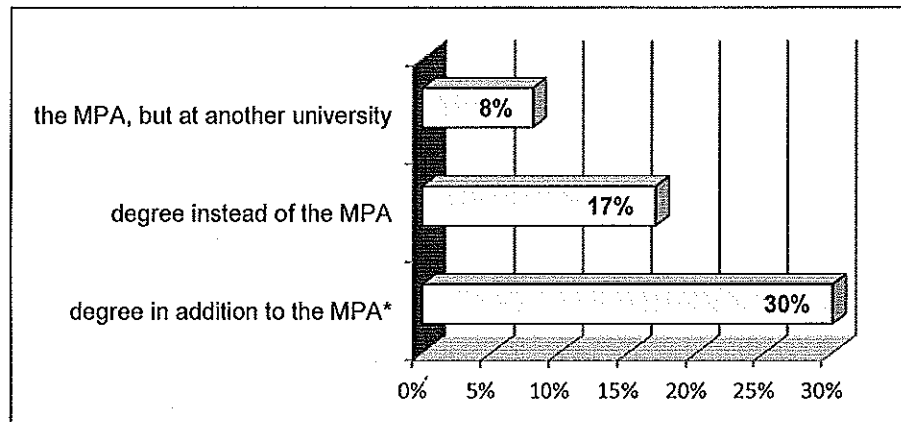
(n=106)

In retrospect, if I had it to do over again I would pursue the OU MPA.



(n=106)

In retrospect, if I had it to do over again I would pursue...



*MBA (17%), JD (14%), PhD (9%)

Longitudinal Results

	2013	2008	2002
Motivation for pursuing MPA			
Career advancement	55%	59%	57%
Increase marketability	20%	18%	<i>n/a</i>
Personal growth	15%	12%	25%
Increase earnings potential	7%	7%	12%
Job requirement	2%	2%	1%
Increase my responsibility	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	1%
<i>Other</i>	3%	1%	3%
<i>n</i>	117	164	89
MPA program strengthened commitment to public service			
	34%	40%	57%
<i>n</i>	118	164	93
...program prepared me for my professional career			
Strongly/agree	79%	87%	76%
Uncertain/neutral	11%	8%	20%
Strongly/disagree	10%	6%	3%
<i>n</i>	118	167	93
MPA training...useful in current position			
Strongly/agree	80%	84%	78%
Uncertain/neutral	12%	6%	15%
Strongly/disagree	9%	9%	8%
<i>n</i>	104	148	80
Would recommend OU MPA to another			
Strongly/agree	83%	93%	79%
Uncertain/neutral	9%	5%	16%
Strongly/disagree	8%	2%	6%
<i>n</i>	118	167	90

Longitudinal Results

	2013	2008	2002
Years of professional experience at entry			
None	33%	32%	4%
1-2 years	21%	21%	28%
3-5 years	22%	20%	33%
6-10 years	16%	13%	16%
11-20 years	6%	12%	16%
More than 20 years	2%	2%	3%
<i>n</i>	108	164	91
First job after graduation			
Did not change jobs	31%	46%	43%
Big break or large step in career	26%	27%	28%
Major shift to new type of organization	17%	15%	9%
Natural progression to new position	13%	10%	10%
Move made to accommodate family	5%	4%	5%
Step backward from previous job	4%	-	-
Other	3%	6%	2%
Pursued further education	1%	4%	-
Temporary detour on smooth career path	1%	1%	-
<i>n</i>	112	166	89
Which functions are part of your current job responsibilities?			
Program planning/development	68%	58%	53%
Leadership	66%	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Program implementation	62%	54%	56%
Budgeting	59%	53%	53%
Program evaluation	59%	52%	54%
Supervision of subordinates	56%	64%	76%
Administrative support	43%	34%	<i>n/a</i>
Contract management/oversight	40%	38%	34%
Agency/executive management	35%	37%	28%
Program marketing	35%	35%	<i>n/a</i>
Human resources management	32%	41%	47%
Information systems management	30%	26%	<i>n/a</i>
Fundraising/development	23%	22%	<i>n/a</i>
Direct service provision	18%	31%	28%
Lobbying/legislative liaison	12%	12%	15%
<i>n</i>	99	145	79

Comments:

Lots of age discrimination is going on in the workforce. Sex discrimination, too. You had a dismal HCA specialty when I was completing my MPA program. I learned absolutely nothing other than the teacher hated the private sector. There was so much bias, I literally hated attending classes.

I am currently unemployed by choice. However, I use my degree and experience while volunteering for several organizations. It would be nice to see questions that include these types of situations. Many of the questions on the survey did not apply to my current situation.

...survey needs to be upgraded

My current title is somewhat misleading; it is my retirement job after 36 years in law enforcement. That 13+ years were as chief of an agency, so I value my MPA from OU and believe it contributed nicely to my career progress.

The MPA program provided general knowledge about local government. I needed to attend seminars to gain specific knowledge about laws and government operations.

I would not change the choice I made to attend OU for an MPA, I was provided the tools needed and interacted with a large population of professionals in the field. The mentorship from Pat Piskulich and Dale Nesbary are invaluable. The career advice from City Manager Alex Allie is the reason I'm in Phoenix right now and I have been extremely successful here.

The MPA Program needs more diversity in instructors and class availability. Too many of the instructors showed favoritism to certain students. Also most of the instructors weren't helpful and the students had to teach themselves. A couple of instructors only taught to the students who knew the information and didn't teach the rest of the class.

Without real work experience opportunity for advancement in government is slim. Very discouraging.

I would be interested in referring OU MPA students for an internship at MPRO.

I think the program really needs to open its eyes and have a joint MBA/MPA program or have the program be centered around financial management. The reality is you need to have a financial background in order to understand contracts and how the city/non-profit runs. You have to know/understand where the money goes and show you have that knowledge. Networking is also key to getting the jobs you want. MBA vs. an MPA for a job...9 times out of 10 they will chose the MBA. Government jobs are scarce in MI and if you want more success stories you need to have your students better prepared with financial management.

I enjoyed my time at Oakland University. Although my current position is an entry level, I know that having the MPA degree will propel me through the federal general schedule.

I will be able to further assess my MOSs value in 3 years after I complete residency.

Phd program

Good luck with your research!

I love OU and the MPA program. It is just very solid.

Pat: I will not be offended if you disregard my survey results. I am probably an outlier. ALSO: How about adding a PhD program for us tragically educated.

The MPA is a great degree. I would be hesitant to recommend it anyone for one main reason. An individual best fit for an MPA has to be a "go-getter" and very motivated in order to secure or develop a career with this degree. It is not like a nursing or engineering degree in which the job will find you. So individuals thinking this degree is enough to help them land that great job may be surprised. Although MPA's are very versatile (a huge plus for the program), it is not a field where one can remain passive. Practical experience matters just as much as the degree. That is something I did not realize going into the program. I was a brand new UG graduate that went directly into the MPA program. The lack of experience has made it difficult for me to compete for positions I would otherwise be qualified for. With that being said, since many students of the program are directly coming from their UG programs, perhaps it would make sense to have a career development advisor, or career advising day specifically for MPA students. The great thing with this degree is that it is so flexible that a person can assume many roles with it, the problem for students like me is we do not have the network (resources) to make it happen. Thank you!

I taught some healthcare administration courses for OU but all of a sudden I didn't hear from them again - would love to teach again

I live in South Carolina now; not sure I can help in any way, but I found the MPA program invaluable to me, also in all my volunteer work since moving down here.

How about PhD in Public Administration?

I was very happy with OU's MPA program. My only complaint is that, having taken all but one of the classes necessary to earn a concentration certificate, I would now have to take multiple other classes to earn the certificate.

I think the emails could be done in a different way. Perhaps do a weekly newsletter that includes a section on job postings and upcoming events, instead of sending emails. I personally, don't want emails with job postings. Also, I think the newsletter is nice when it has stories about grads who are successful and doing interesting things, but find updates about babies and weddings kind of weird. In summary, limit the emails and make the newsletter more professional-based. About the program itself, I preferred the core courses that were academically challenging, some of the electives were pretty light on content.

the market fell out of the hospital business when i completed my degree so i had to take my career in a different direction.