

# **Results**

**MPA Alumni Survey**

**December 2019**

MPA Program

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

## Key Findings:

- Career advancement (57%) is the most common motivation for pursuing the MPA, followed by marketability (16%) and personal growth (15%). About two-thirds of those responding (65%) believe the degree provides them marketability and half of them (51%) report that it gave an appreciation for public service. Forty-five percent indicates that it led to a new job title, 43% to a higher salary, and 35% to mobility.
- Most respondents (86%) say that OU's MPA program had prepared them for their career and nearly all (92%) of them report that they would recommend the program to others. More than two-thirds of the respondents (83%) say they would pursue the OU MPA if they had it to do over again (with 16% pursuing additional degrees).
- Most respondents indicate that they have become far more proficient in each of the core program competencies, when comparing themselves at program entry vs. graduation. Reported improvements in the "somewhat proficient" and "very proficient" in each competency of lead/manage, participate/contribute, articulate/apply, and communicate/interact is 17%, 10%, 15%, and 6% respectively.
- With respect to the strengths of the MPA program, respondents say that small class sizes (51%), curriculum (37%), and full-time faculty (31%) are the top three strengths.
- The MPA reportedly increases one's commitment to public service. 75% of respondents say that their commitment was strong or very strong at their time of entry to the program and the proportion increased to 85% by graduation.
- The majority of MPA alumni pursued a concentration, and that, Local Government Management and Nonprofit Management were the most popular concentrations. Of the alumni that chose a concentration, 95% completed it and most thought it was very useful to their career.
- 64% of respondents say they pursued a concentration – local government (43%) and nonprofit management (30%) are the most popular concentrations. Of those who chose a concentration, 95% say they completed it and most of them (96%) found having done so to be somewhat (30%) or very (56%) useful to their career.
- Two-thirds of the respondents (67%) completed the Capstone project and one-third (32%) of them completed an internship. 85% of respondents say the project or internship is somewhat useful (39%) or very useful (46%).
- Most respondents say they entered the program with little experience - 83% had less than five years of work experience.

- MPA program is lacking in diversity –88% respondents are “white/Caucasian” while 3% Asian, 5% Black, and 2% mixed race.
- Upon entering the program, almost half of the respondents (46%) were working in government (whether local, state, or federal), a quarter (25%) worked in the for-profit sector, and fewer than one in five (16%) reported working in the nonprofit sector. Compare this to today, where the majority of graduates report working in the nonprofit industry (33%) – a notable increase from employment at program start. Another third work in government, with the proportion of state government workers increasing since program start (11% to 13% after graduation), and the proportion of local government employees decreasing since the program start (32% to 21%). Job titles and employers are wide-ranging, with common positions in fundraising, analysis, program coordination and management, and in the education (particularly higher education), health and social service fields.

## 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 – we conducted survey in 2002, 2008, and 2013.

We took this on as a class project in PA 6100 (Quantitative Methodology in Public Administration) during the Fall 2019 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 schedule 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 401 alums – thereby lending itself to the use of electronic solicitation. We utilized the university’s Qualtrics (a new survey tool) account. A secondary file contains another 133 alumni on whom we have only street addresses, i.t., not e-email links.

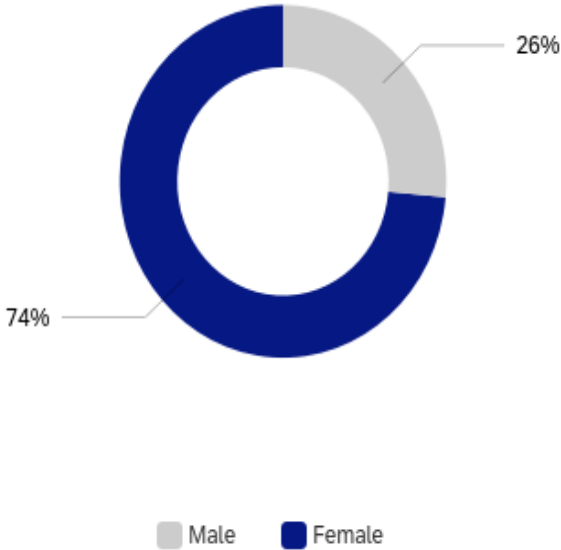
We e-mailed a link to our instrument and then followed up twice within approximately 10 days intervals. The first email was sent out 14 October 2019, second email on 24 October, and third email on 5 November. The response rates are shown as below:

	Sent	Undeliverable	Started/Completed	Response rate
Via Qualtrics	401	-	70	18%
Via USPS	133	13	18	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>17%</b>

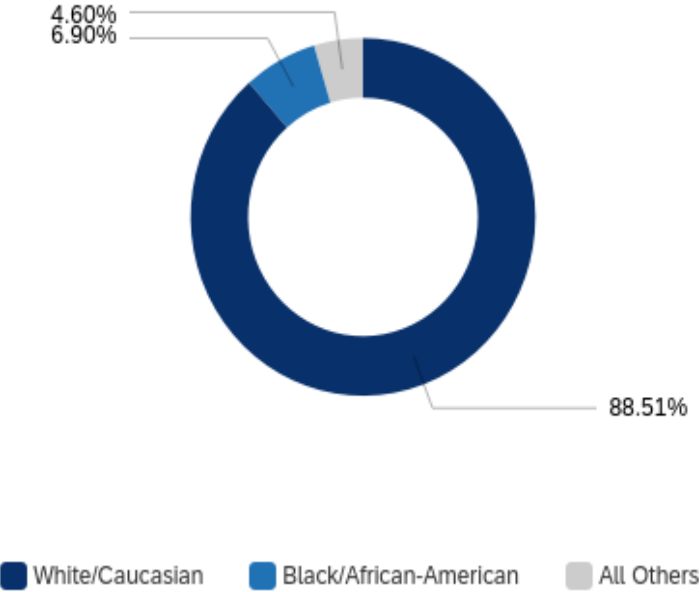
Because we sent out the survey to all the alumni since 1972 class year, the response rate is much lower than the previous year.

Although students analyzed collected data for their class project, they could not analyze all the responses due to semester duration. Prof. Kim completed the coding and data analysis compiled in this report.

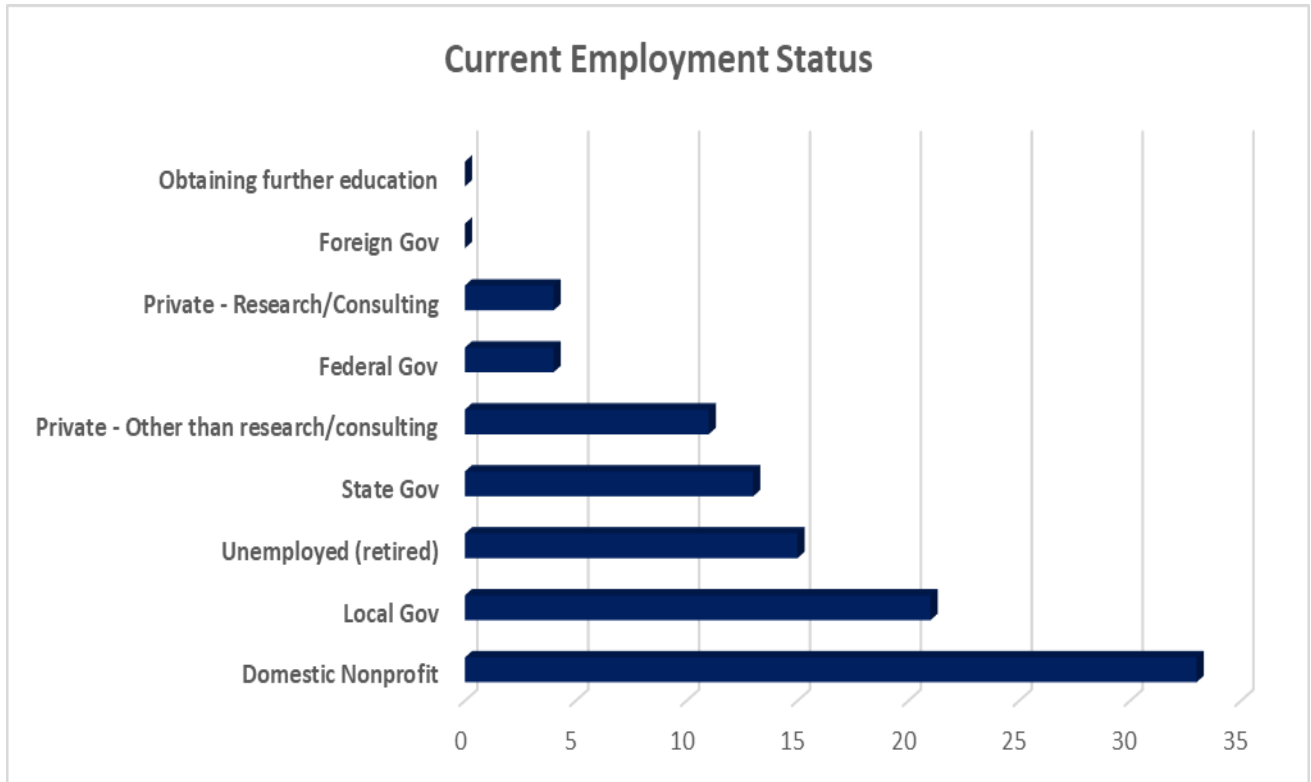
**Respondent Demographics: Gender**



**Respondent Demographics: Race/Ethnicity**



## Respondents' Current Employment Status:



(n = 82)

Employment Status	Percentage
Domestic Nonprofit	33%
Local Government	21%
Unemployed (retired)	15%
State Government	13%
Private – Other than research/consulting	11%
Federal Government	4%
Private – Research/consulting	4%
Foreign Government	0%
Obtaining Further Education	0%

## Respondent Job Title, Employer

### Education

Procurement Manager, U of M  
Volunteer/fundraising, Utica Community School  
Assistant Director, OU  
MPA Program Coordinator, OU  
Director of Legal Services and Grants, Lenawee  
Intermediate School District  
Student Affairs Specialist, Marquette University Law  
School  
Intl Advisor, OU  
Coordinator, OU  
Executive Director, OU  
Director of Philanthropy, OU  
Director of Student Programs, MSU  
Development Associate, OU  
Alumni & Parent Program Coordinator, OU  
Senior Planning Analyst, OU  
Constituent Record Coordinator, OU  
Experiential Learning programs Manager, OU  
Director of Student Affairs and Senior Deputy Title IX  
Coordinator for Students, Eastern Virginia Medical  
School, Norfolk, Virginia  
Associate Vice President, Wayne State University  
Corporate and Foundation Relations Officer, OU

### Nonprofit Organizations

President, Pikes Peak Hospice  
Executive director, Workforce Intelligence Network  
Quality Assurance Analyst, Easterseals  
CIO, MercyOne Iowa  
Administrative Staff, Middleton Place Foundation,  
Charleston, SC  
Director of Grant Management, Presbyterian Villages of  
Michigan Foundation  
Executive Director, HSUSDC  
Project Manager, AARDA  
Contract Modeling Analyst, Henry Ford Health System  
MIS & Special Projects Coordinator, Macomb/St. Clair  
Workforce Development Board  
Administrative Staff, Middleton Place Foundation  
Director, American Cancer Society  
Senior Project Manager/Senior Manager, Michigan  
Medicine

### Federal Government

HR Specialist, US Environment Protection Agency

### Private Sector

Financial advisor/Associate Vice President,  
Averi Praise Financial  
Executive director, a law firm  
Legal Assistant, Howard & Howard Attorneys  
Chief Administrative Officer, GLPG  
Project Manager – corporate strategies, GM  
Financial  
Sr. Consultant

### State Government

Management analyst, Michigan Supreme Court  
Probation/Parole Agent, State of Michigan  
Business Development Manager, MEDC  
ARSA, State of Michigan  
Assistance Payments Specialist, State of  
Michigan  
Representative, State of Michigan

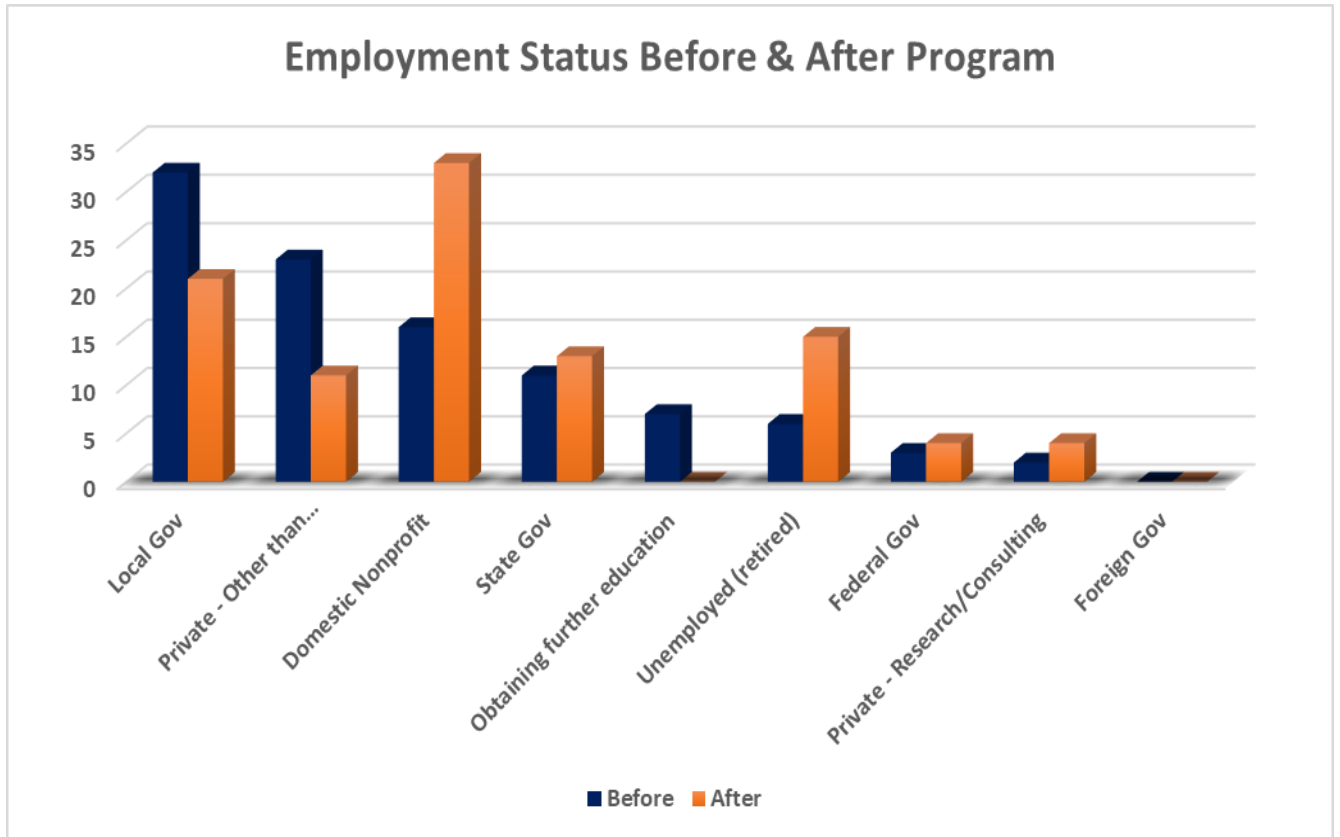
### Local Government

River Bends Park Coordinator, Charter  
Township of Shelby  
City planner, City of Novi  
County administrator  
City Manager, City of El Cerrito, California  
Probation Officer, Oakland County  
Financial Director, Older Persons Commission  
Bookkeeper, 51<sup>st</sup> District Court  
Deputy Director, Macomb County  
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
Specialist, Macomb County  
Youth and Family Caseworker, Oakland County  
Information Technology Administrator,  
Springfield Charter Township  
Program Coordinator, OC  
Director of Authorities, City of Auburn Hills  
Village Manager, Village of Dimondale  
Administrative Assistant to the Clerk, Charter  
Township of Bloomfield

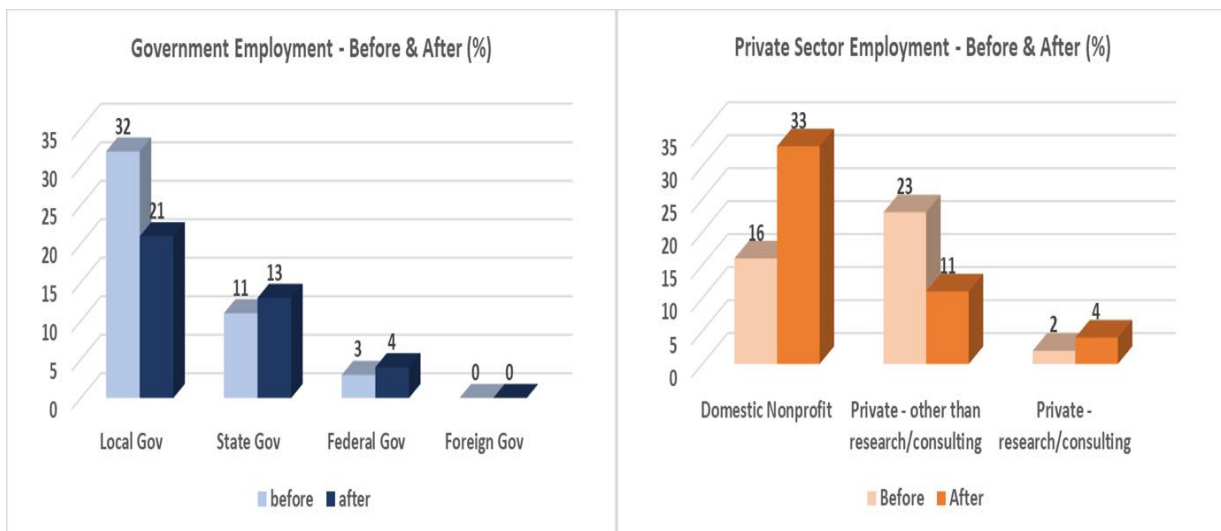
### Other

Retired

### Respondents' Change in Employment Status- Before & After OU MPA:

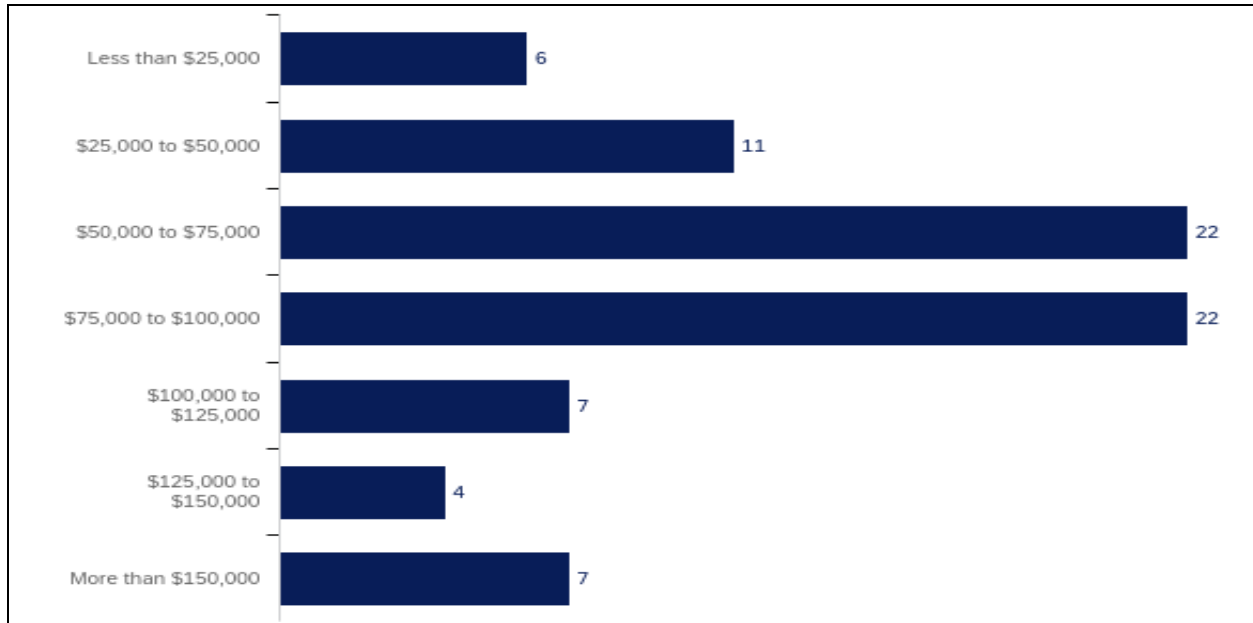


### Respondents' Change in Employment Status in Gov. and Private Sector – Before & After OU MPA:





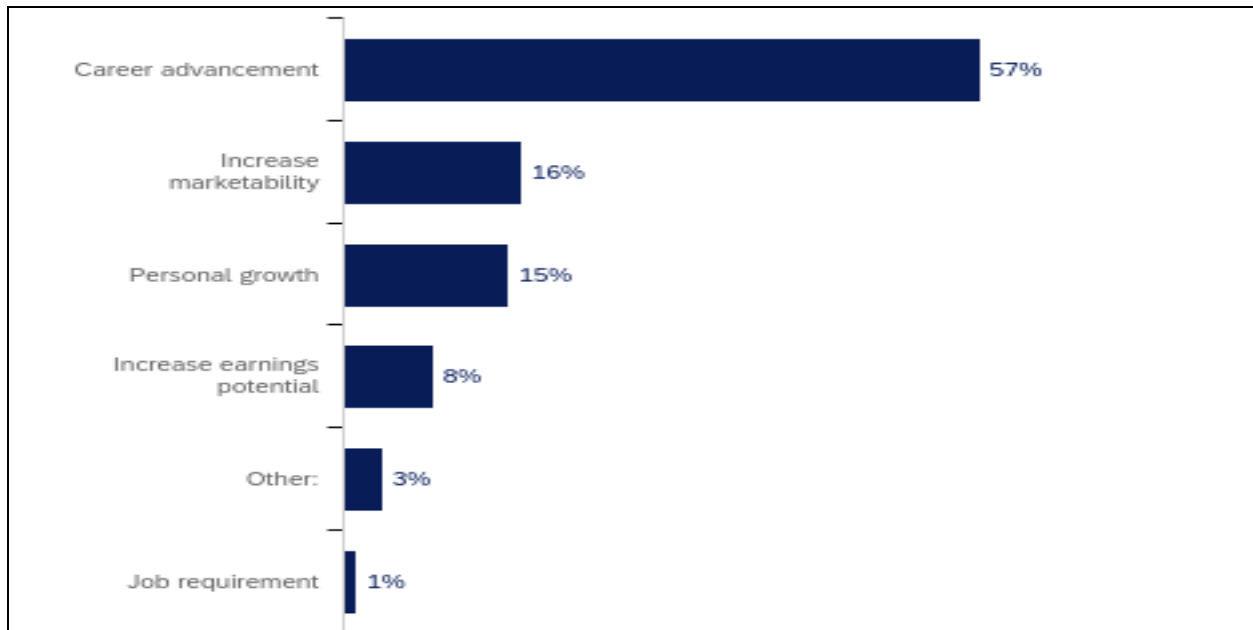
## Salary Range of the Current Position



(n=79)

Salary range	Percentage
Less than \$25,000	8%
\$25,000 to \$ 50,000	14%
\$50,000 to \$ 75,000	28%
\$75,000 to \$100,000	28%
\$100,000 to \$125,000	9%
\$125,000 to \$150,000	5%
More than \$150,000	9%

## Motivation for pursuing the MPA degree

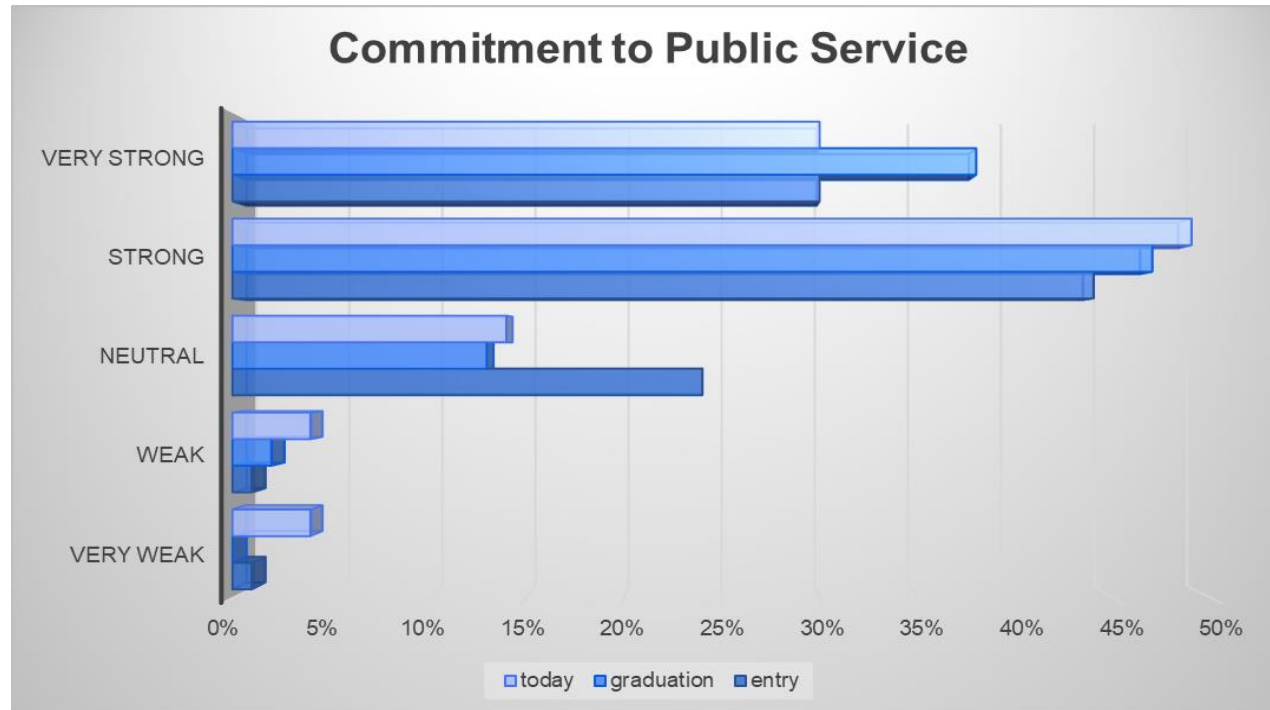


(N = 87)

	2019	2013	2008
Career advancement	57%	55%	59%
Increase marketability	16%	20%	18%
Personal growth	15%	15%	12%
Increase earnings potential	8%	7%	7%
Job requirement	1%	2%	2%
Other	3%	3%	1%

### How would you rate your commitment to public service?

	Very Weak	Weak	Neutral	Strong	Very Strong	Very/Strong 2019	Very/Strong 2013	Very/strong 2008
...At entry	1%	1%	24%	44%	30%	74%	70%	73%
...At graduation	0%	2%	13%	47%	38%	85%	87%	88%
...Today	4%	4%	14%	49%	30%	79%	77%	82%



## Affect for the MPA Program

		<i>n</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>2019</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2%</b>
	Looking back, I think the OU MPA program prepared me for my professional career						
2013		118	14%	65%	11%	7%	3%
2008	Looking back, I think the OU MPA program Prepared me <b>well</b> for my professional career	167	22%	65%	8%	4%	2%
<b>2019</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>
	I would recommend the OU MPA Program to any person seeking a career In public or nonprofit management						
2013		118	37%	46%	9%	7%	1%
2008		167	45%	48%	5%	1%	1%

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

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

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	Not at all proficient	Somewhat proficient	Very proficient	Uncertain	Total
Lead/manage	24%	64%	13%	1%	88
Participate/contribute	10%	58%	30%	2%	87
Articulate/apply	16%	63%	20%	1%	88
Communicate/Interact	7%	52%	39%	2%	88

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### ...at graduation

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	Not at all proficient	Somewhat proficient	Very proficient	Uncertain	Total
Lead/manage	5%	33%	61%	1%	88
Participate/contribute	1%	20%	78%	1%	87
Articulate/apply	1%	17%	81%	1%	88
Communicate/Interact	2%	16%	81%	1%	88

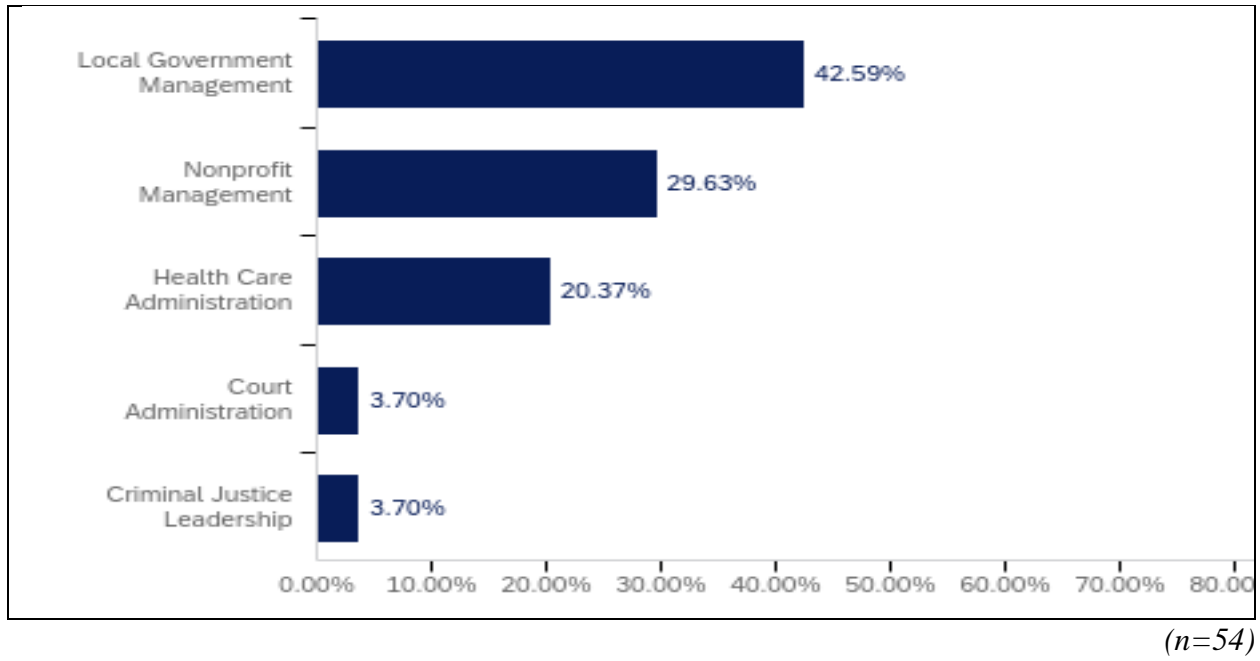
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### Did you pursue a concentration in the MPA program?

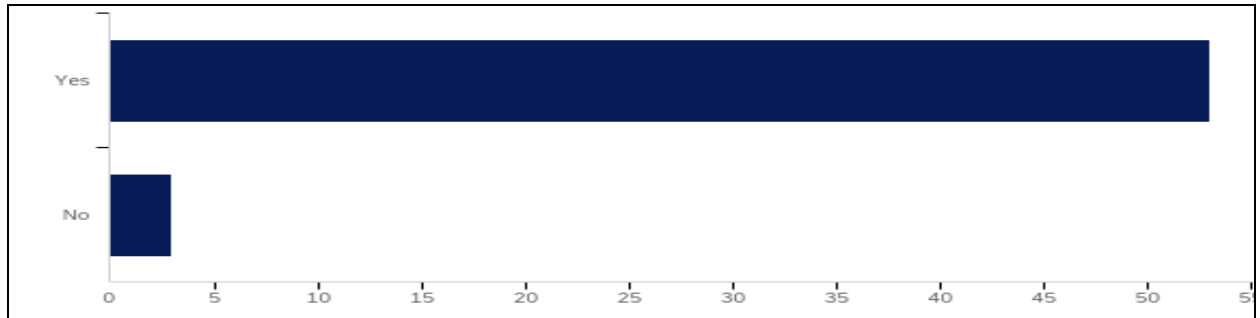
Yes	63.64% (56)
No	36.36% (32)

*(n=88)*

### If Yes, which one?

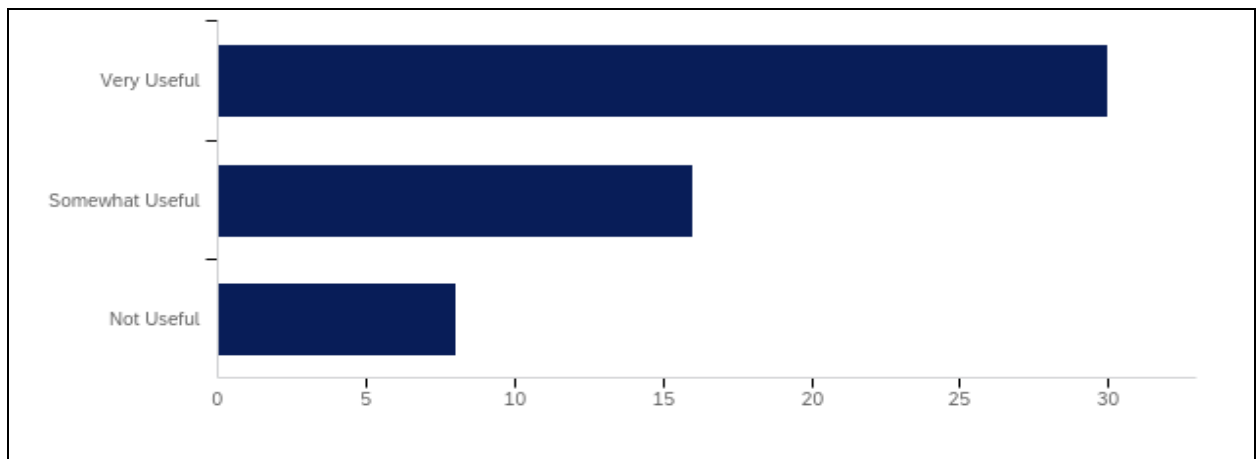


### Did you complete this concentration?



(n=56)

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



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Very Useful	56% (30)
Somewhat Useful	30% (16)
Not Useful	15% (8)

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(n = 56)

### Which capstone requirement did you complete?

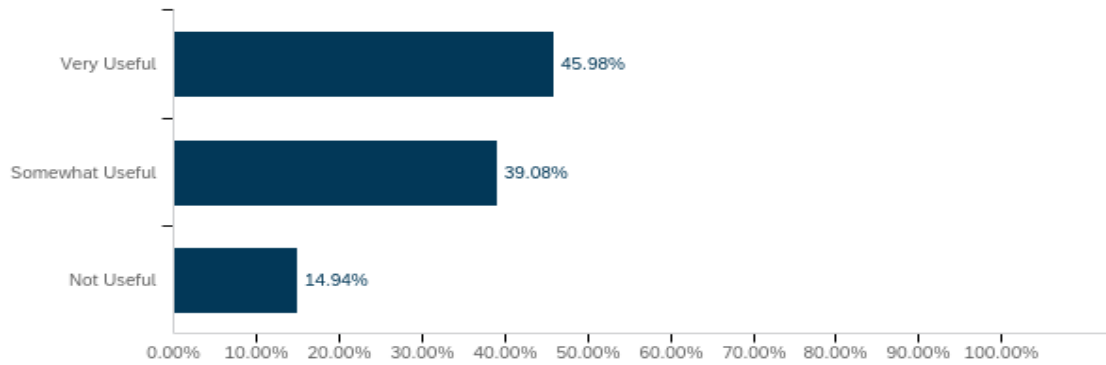
Project	67.82% (59)
Internship	32.18% (28)

*(n=87)*

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

Very Useful	45.98% (40)
Somewhat Useful	39.08% (34)
Not Useful	14.94% (13)

*(n=87)*





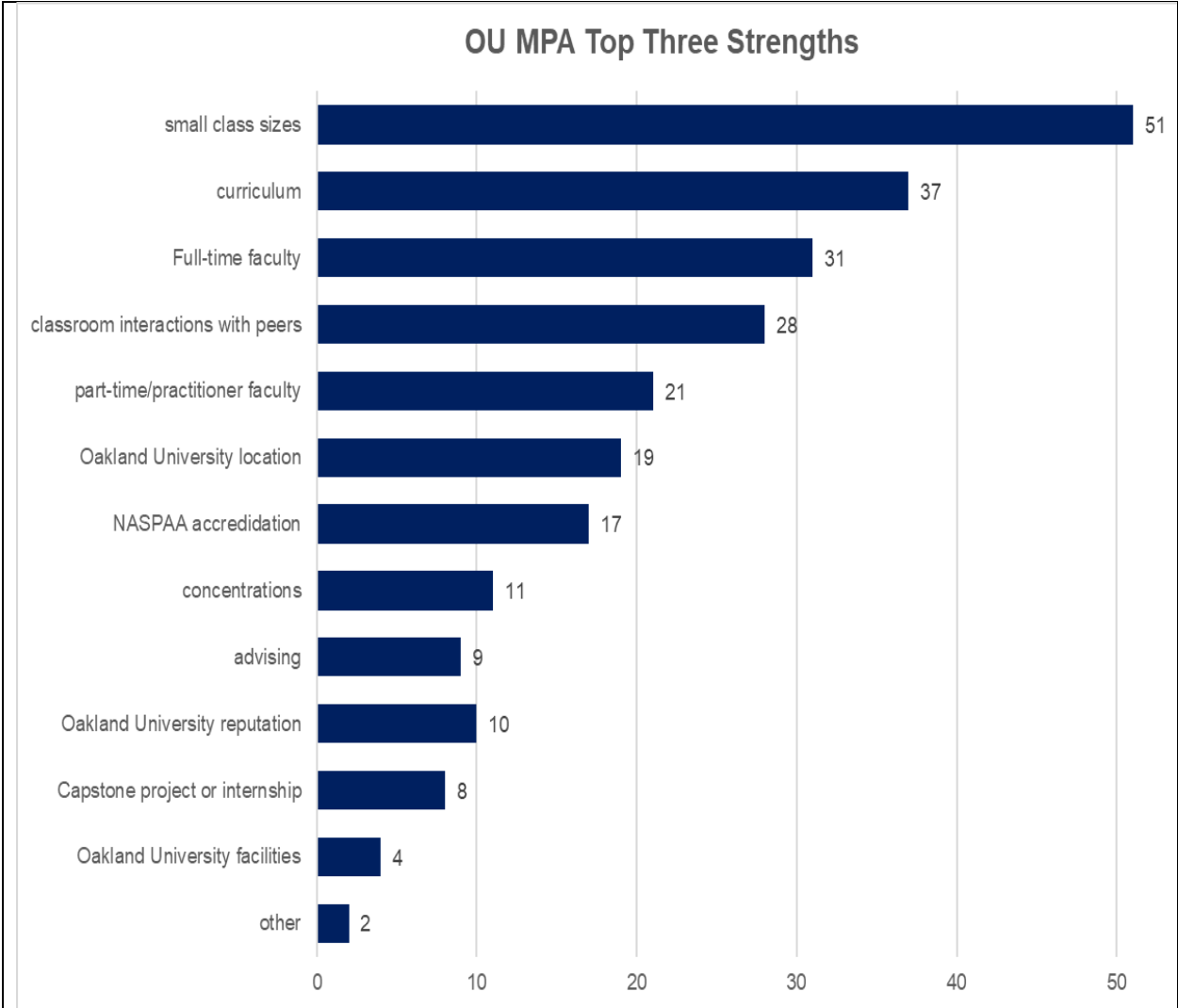
**Is there another topic you wish you could have studied while enrolled in the OU MPA program, but that was not available to you?**

Yes	33% (28)
No	66% (56)

*(n=84)*

- Diversity, civil law, finance, politics, environment politics
- Court administration
- Baci's City Management
- City planning and economic development
- Labor Negotiations
- Economic development
- Information technology
- More focus on current events and excel
- Marketing and communications for the public sector
- Public relations
- Grant writing
- More hands-on learning and less book learning
- More in-depth budgeting (analyzing budget report examples, making budgeting decisions, etc.)
- Marketing (many people in public service need to market their programs on their own, and I feel like this wasn't addressed at all)
- Being a manager
- Federal government
- Something with a higher education focus
- Transportation

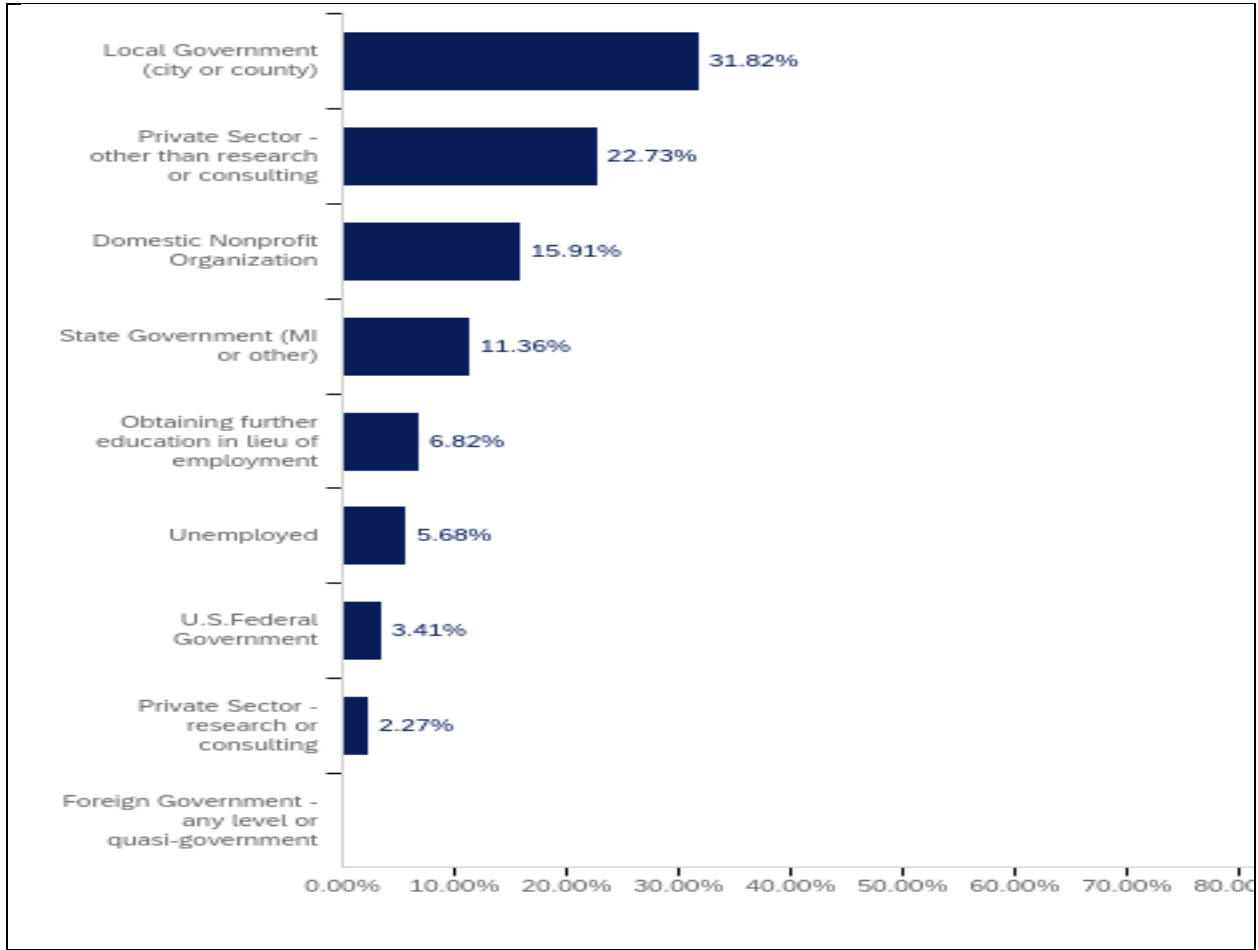
**Which of the following components of the OU MPA program would you consider its top three strengths?**



(n=87)

- Small class sizes (51%), program curriculum (37%), and full-time faculty (31%) are reported as the top three strengths of the OU MPA program.

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



(n=88)

	2013	2019
Local Government	29%	32%
Private Sector – other than research or consulting	19%	23%
Domestic Nonprofit Organization	21%	16%
State Government (MI or other)	6%	11%
Obtaining further education in lieu of employment	10%	7%
Unemployed	10%	6%
Private Sector- other than research or consulting	3%	2%
Foreign Government- any level or quasi-government	0%	0%

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

	2019	2013	2008
None	27%	33%	32%
1-2 years	22%	21%	21%
3-5 years	30%	22%	20%
6-10 years	12%	16%	13%
11-20 years	6%	6%	12%
More than 20 years	3%	2%	2%
<i>Mean</i>	4.6	3.9	4.6
<i>Median</i>	3	2	2
<i>Mode</i>	0	0	0
<i>Stdev</i>	6.8	5.4	5.8
<i>n</i>	86	108	164

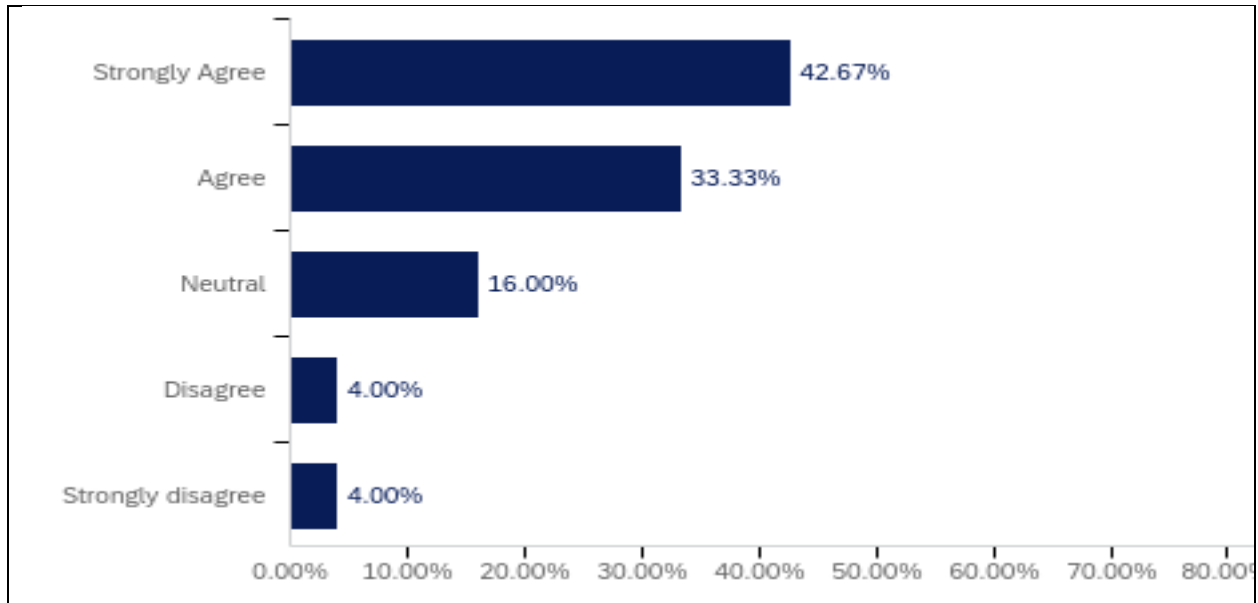
**Which of the following best describes your first job after completing the OU MPA program?**

	2019 (n=87)	2013 (n=112)	2008 (n=166)
Did not change jobs	29%	31%	46%
A big break or large step in my career	18%	26%	27%
A major shift to a new type of organization	17%	17%	15%
A natural progression from my previous job to a new position	12%	13%	10%
A move made to accommodate family demands	2%	4%	-
A step backward from my previous job	1%	1%	4%
Pursued further education	1%	1%	1%
A temporary detour in an otherwise smooth career path	3%	3%	6%
Other			

## Which functions are part of your current job responsibilities?

	2019 (n=87)	2013 (n=99)	2008 (n=145)
Program planning/development	54%	68%	58%
Leadership	64%	66%	n/a
Program implementation	59%	62%	54%
Budgeting	46%	59%	53%
Program evaluation	43%	59%	52%
Supervision of subordinates	55%	56%	64%
Administrative support	38%	43%	34%
Contract management/oversight	38%	40%	38%
Agency/executive management	30%	35%	37%
Program marketing	33%	35%	35%
Human resources management	26%	32%	41%
Information systems management	19%	30%	26%
Fundraising/development	29%	23%	22%
Direct service provision	28%	18%	31%
Lobbying/legislative liaison	6%	12%	12%

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



	2019 (n=87)	2013 (n=104)
Strongly Agree	43% (32)	31%
Agree	33% (25)	49%
Neutral	16% (12)	12%
Disagree	4% (3)	3%
Strongly disagree	4% (3)	6%

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

[2019]

	n	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	uncertain
Hard work/diligence/persistence		87%	9%	2%	1%
Intelligence/competence		80%	19%	0%	1%
Undergraduate education		48%	40%	8%	4%
MPA education		<b>51%</b>	41%	7%	1%
MPA education, concentration		<b>33%</b>	40%	15%	12%
Networking/personal contacts		40%	8%	15%	7%
Other degrees/training		29%	38%	13%	19%
Opportunity/luck		35%	54%	7%	5%

[2013]

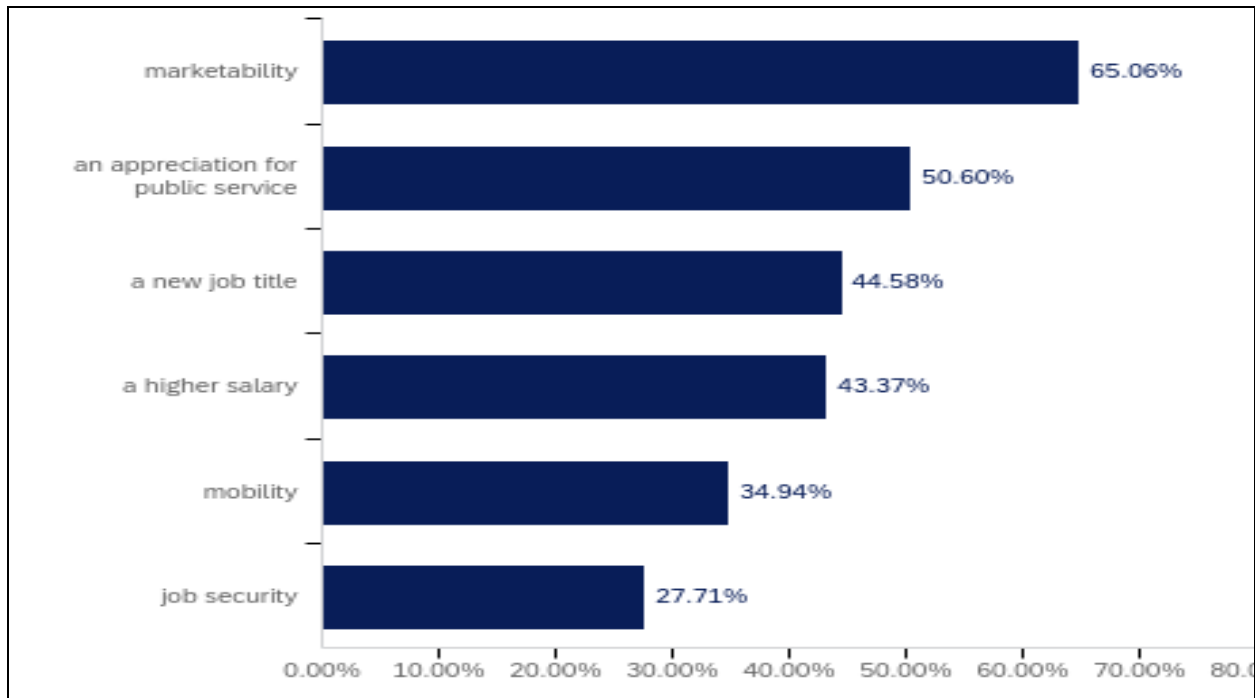
	n	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Uncertain
Hard work/diligence/persistence	109	88%	9%	3%	-
Intelligence/competence	109	83%	17%	1%	-
Undergraduate education	108	50%	43%	7%	-
MPA education	109	51%	42%	7%	-
MPA education, concentration	103	21%	40%	27%	12%
Networking/personal contacts	109	55%	34%	10%	1%
Other degrees/training	104	37%	41%	12%	11%
Opportunity/luck	104	47%	40%	9%	4%

[2008]

	n	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	uncertain
Hard work/diligence/persistence	159	89%	9%	2%	-
Intelligence/competence	159	81%	18%	1%	-
Undergraduate education	161	64%	30%	6%	-
MPA education	162	59%	33%	8%	-
MPA education, concentration	n/a				
Networking/personal contacts	158	56%	30%	13%	1%
Other degrees/training	142	37%	42%	15%	6%
Opportunity/luck	153	29%	54%	14%	-

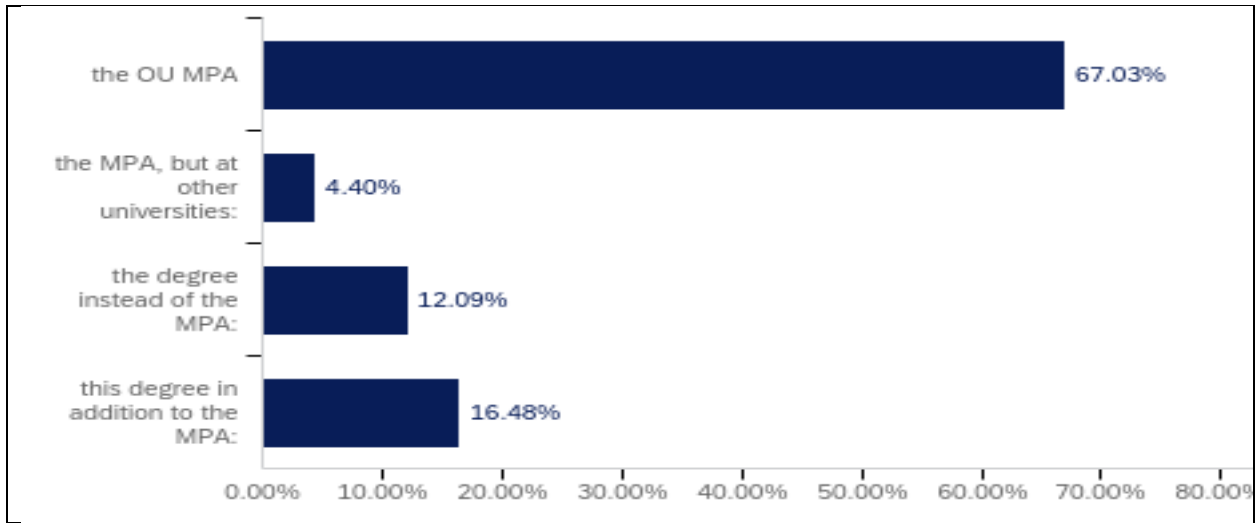


**In retrospect, the MPA degree gave me:**



	2019 (n=87)
Marketability	65% (54)
An appreciation for public service	51% (42)
A new job title	45% (37)
A higher salary	43% (36)
Mobility	35% (29)
Job security	28% (23)

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



	2019
The OU MPA	67% (61)
The MPA, but at other universities	4% (4)
Another degree instead of the MPA	12% (11)
Another degree in addition to the MPA	16% (15)

## Longitudinal Results:

	2019	2013	2008	2002
<b>Motivation for pursuing MPA</b>				
Career advancement	57	55	59	57
Increase marketability	16	20	18	n/a
Personal growth	15	15	12	25
Increase earnings potential	8	7	7	1s
Job requirement	1	2	2	1
Increase my responsibility	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
Other	3	3	1	3
<i>n</i>	88	117	164	89
<b>MPA program strengthened commitment to public service</b>				
	85	70	73	57
<i>n</i>	87	118	164	93
<b>...program prepared me for my professional career</b>				
Strongly/agree	86	79	87	76
Uncertain/neutral	5	11	8	20
Strongly/disagree	9	10	6	3
<i>n</i>	87	118	167	93
<b>MPA training...useful in current position</b>				
Strongly/agree	76	80	84	78
Uncertain/neutral	16	12	6	15
Strongly/disagree	8	9	9	8
<i>n</i>	75	107	148	80
<b>Would recommend OU MPA to another</b>				
Strongly/agree	92	83	93	79
Uncertain/neutral	3	9	5	16
Strongly/disagree	6	8	2	6
<i>n</i>	88	118	167	90

## Longitudinal Results:

	2019	2013	2008	2002
<b>Years of professional experience at entry</b>				
None	22	33	32	4
1-2 years	20	21	21	28
3-5 years	26	22	20	33
6-10 years	10	16	13	16
11-20 years	5	6	12	16
More than 20 years	3	2	2	3
<i>n</i>	87	108	164	89
<b>First job after graduation</b>				
Did not change jobs	29	31	46	43
Big break or large step in career	18	26	27	28
Major shift to new type of organization	17	17	15	9
Natural progression to new position	12	13	10	10
Move made to accommodate family	2	5	4	5
Step backward from previous job	2	4	-	-
Other	3	3	6	2
Pursued further education	1	1	4	-
Temporary detour on smooth career path	1	1	1	-
<i>n</i>	87	112	166	89
<b>Which functions are part of your current job responsibilities?</b>				
Program planning/development	54	68	58	53
Leadership	64	66	n/a	n/a
Program implementation	59	62	54	56
Budgeting	46	59	53	53
Program evaluation	44	59	52	54
Supervision of subordinates	55	56	64	76
Administrative support	38	43	34	n/a
Contract management/oversight	38	40	38	34
Agency/executive management	30	35	37	28
Program marketing	33	35	35	n/a
Human resources management	26	32	41	47
Information systems management	19	30	26	n/a
Fundraising/development	29	23	22	n/a
Direct service provision	28	18	31	28
Lobbying/legislative liaison	6	12	12	15
<i>n</i>	87	99	145	79

## Comments:

- Elections Administration should be a course in the MPA program.
- Additional Healthcare Administration classes would be great!
- I retired after a 40-year career in local and county government as the senior executive. My OU MPA degree contributed to my success. I also was fortunate to serve as a lecturer in the MPA program after completing the program for State and local executives at Harvard. I found the mix of this background greatly assisted in enriching the experience and outlook of the students I interacted with. Because it is nearly impossible to "learn" the realities of government through a book, including working professionals into the MPA program continues to be essential.
- For Question # 20 "In retrospect, the MPA degree gave me: (Please check all that apply)" there should be the following outcome added as one of the answers: "Higher Amount of Student Loan Debt"
- I love OU ☐
- I don't know how I missed the 40th Anniversary Celebration, but I would have loved to attend. Consider in the future email invitations to alumni. Thank you, Joann Bautti
- The Oakland University mpa program was a great opportunity.
- Graduated in 1986 presently retired. I was in the core program which the courses at that time presented an over view of everything. I cannot remember but there wasn't any type of concentrated classes. The MPA program is a little more diverse that when I was enrolled.
- Great job, keep it up! Love hearing about the program and seeing all the success! :)
- Good survey.
- Thank you for the lovely networking reception this past month. Hands down, Suzanne Rossi, is one of the best people who serve in the MPA. Thank you for your commitment and service to students, Suzanne.
- This survey is a bit of a problem for me because I retired from full-time service in the U.S. District Court in 2003. Immediately upon retiring I was asked to assume the directorship of the Historical Society. This position is largely uncompensated but has many responsibilities. In addition, the court asked me to interview federal judicial officers and court personnel for their oral histories. I am compensated for this activity. Answering any of the questions about my current job status is really difficult because there's no option for retired but still working virtually without pay in one position and being compensated in another! I enjoyed my time at OU but, considering my odd situation, I don't know whether a student would benefit from my input except on a general level regarding federal public service (of which I'm a great supporter).
- I was very happy with the education and networking experiences that I received from the MPA program. I have always been - and always will be - tremendously grateful for the opportunity.
- The MPA taught me many things that helped me to succeed later in life. It developed my writing skills, my analytical skills, my research skills, and my presentation skills. I feel like it helped my marketability which led me to my current career. My experience

with the PA and MPA staff at the time turned out to be invaluable because they really helped me to develop the aforementioned skills when I didn't think it was possible. Through my interactions with them I realized that I was capable of accomplishing so much more in my life. I should mention that my concentration was in Public Personnel Management which isn't listed in this survey. Thanks.

- Pls. review the verbiage in Q23 and Q4, Part II, bullet 3 of this survey.
- WSU MPA program participants are very close and the program offers multiple networking opportunities. I wish we had this as we have excellent graduates of the OU MPA program. I'd be interested in helping organize more networking opportunities for alumni.
- I was a second career student, knowing I would be relocating. The education I received was very helpful in finding a new path for my energy and knowledge. For those located in Metro Detroit, I would very highly recommend OU and the MPA program. In the last 20 years, I have recommended, and successfully gotten at least 3 young people to get into an MPA program. It's too bad I'm not in the Rochester area any more.
- A wonderful program with outstanding faculty and staff
- Thank you for a wonderful event on Friday and great job !!!
- Most memorial classes, info tech, Human Resources and labor management, stats and quantitative analysis. Their importance to professional development is the only reason I responded.
- 29 years as elected Mayor/City Manager of small Michigan City. Trustee and President of Michigan Municipal League, SEMCOG Executive Board & rep, MML Property Liability Board of Directors 9 years, founding member of MACRO
- I will forever be grateful to OU (and Michelle Piskulich in particular, who was my advisor) for helping me on my career journey. I've always been proud to be an MPA grad from OU and I spread the word as much as I can. Although I'm in California now, I've had the opportunity to recently visit campus and the ICMA Student Chapter and remain impressed with the quality of the program and the students who will be my future colleagues. I am wrapping up this year as ICMA President and will continue to brag about my alma mater. Please call on me (now that I will have more free time as my term ends) if you need a testimonial or if I can be of service to the OU MPA community. Thank you--Karen Pinkos, City Manager, City of El Cerrito, California.
- I strongly believe for anyone considering the Court Administration specialty that they have experience working in the court and currently do work within the court. I was working in the private sector, and despite getting my MPA, having a bachelors in Pre-Law, having the Court Administration concentration, etc. no one was willing to hire me for a mid-level position in a Court unless I had a JD or had working for several years within the Court already. The entry-level court jobs were simply too low paying compared to the private sector, and I was unable to ever gain employment with the Courts for any offered positions other than entry-level, which did not require the MPA degree anyway. It was a real shame. I still enjoyed the program and learned so much. I would definitely recommend it to others, but perhaps not that concentration if you are mid-career, like I was, and looking to make some kind of change.

- I really felt that the MPA degree opened up my marketability and after completing job searches in a few states now, it's been really helpful that it's so flexible and opened up some new markets for me. I was also able to tweak my final project survey and bring it to a new employer, as well as help advise the student groups I work with in regards to funding options and opportunities.
- I must be some kind of outlier... since I now work for the program. Great survey!