Results

MPA Employer Survey
Spring 2015

MPA Program
Department of Political Science, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan 48309

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Background

This report is the continuous effort to conduct systematic assessment of the MPA program, its relevancy to the local and regional needs and viability. Per NASPAA standards, accredited MPA programs are required to regularly revamp their curriculums to meet and serve community needs. Understanding local needs can assist our MPA in staying relevant and valued. Last MPA Employer survey was conducted in 2009.

This project was conducted in PA 620 (Quantitative Methods) class during the Winter 2015 term. It was a class project with the service-learning component. Students were able to: (1) understand and practice survey research – a primary tool of social science and public administration; (2) practice and apply data analysis and computer techniques taught in the class; and (3) analyze, synthesize, and think critically while assisting with the program task.

Methodology

Instrument. Previous survey instrument from 2009 was used as a template for 2015 survey. During a classroom discussion students offered minor edits to the wording of some questions, change in logical order of questions in the survey and numbering (see Appendix for the survey instrument).

Sampling. Students were required to generate a list of local government, nonprofit, health care, court administration and criminal justice agencies of the Metro Detroit region. Students were divided into five groups based on their concentrations. Undecided students were assigned to the groups with the fewest members. The task was to generate 20 names of organizations with contact information per student. Ultimately with 17 students in the class the compiled list consisted of 340 organizations from all five concentrations.

Dissemination. The survey instrument was entered on the surveymonkey.com website to generated a link and subsequently use it in emails sent to contacts from the list of organizations. Using the contact persons identified the students were then charged with contacting each of their 20 organizations via email, phone or in person. A standard cover letter was prepared, but students were encouraged to personalize it the way they find it fit for their contacts to maximize the response rate. Another strategy that was used to increase number of responses was multiple follow-ups. In total, students were asked to follow up at least 3-4 times with their contacts during a month period. To make sure those who completed the survey are not contacted repeatedly, the aggregate file with all organizations and contact names has been updated on a weekly basis. We ultimately received 118 responses accounting for 34.7% response rate.

Timeline. The survey instrument was finalized in February. Cover/invitation letter, as well as the list of organizations, were both prepared the same month. March was dedicated for dissemination of the survey and repeated follow-ups each week. In April each student was assigned a question from the survey to analyze, interpret, and write up a short summary/conclusion paragraph with recommendations for the program based on his/her findings. Prof. Saitgalina reviewed and where necessary edited student submissions and prepared this report.
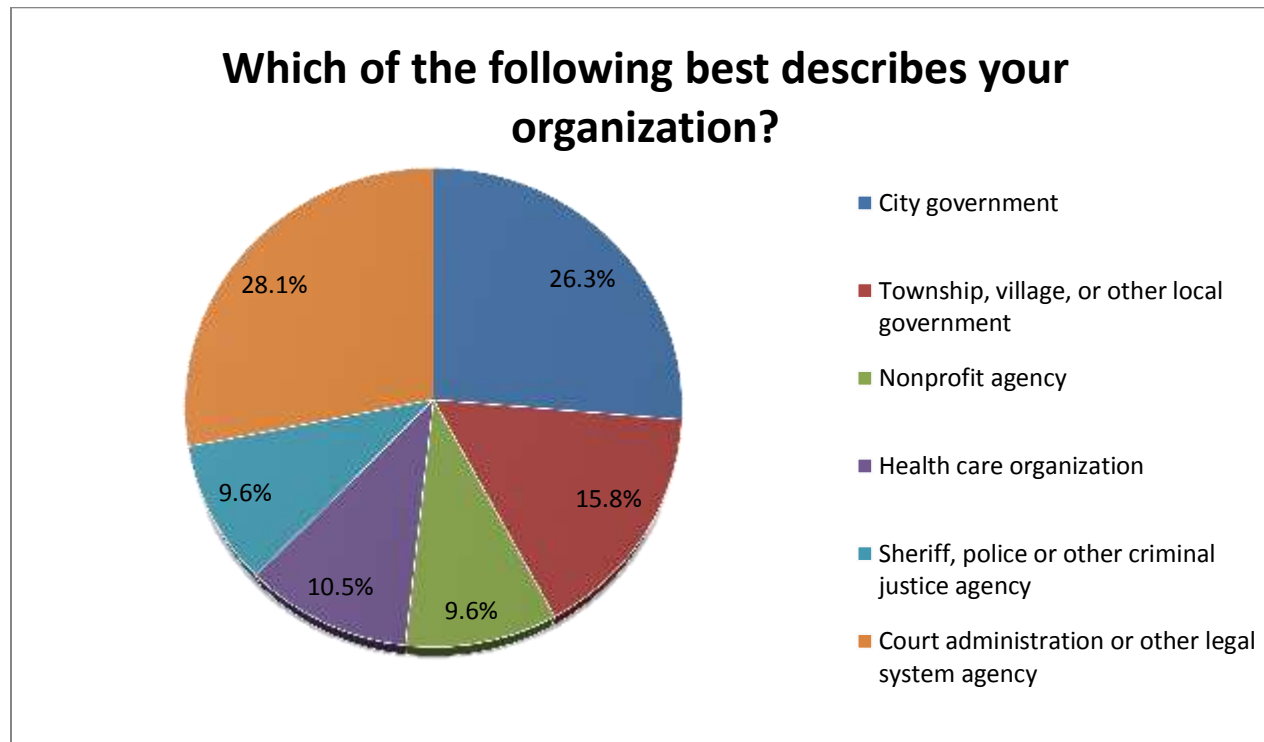
Project Team

Meggan Brown	Elysia Khalil	Mathangi Radhakrishnan
Rhonda Davis	Leah Konal	Jarrett Sanders
Ashley Freeman	Matthew Leczel	Rebecca Snay
James Gallagher	Ashley Levin	Sharole Speagle
Colleen Glodich	Victoria Martinuzzi	Brent Turner
Maxwell Hooper	Enida Metaj	

Participating Organizations

Which of the following best describes your organization?

- City government — 26.3%
- Township, village, or other local government — 15.8%
- Nonprofit agency — 9.6%
- Health care organization — 10.5%
- Sheriff, police or other criminal justice agency — 9.6%
- Court administration or other legal system agency — 28.1%

City Government

City of **Auburn Hills** *(City Manager)*
City of **Berkley** *(City Manager)*
City of **Birmingham** *(City Manager)*
City of **Bloomfield Hills** *(City Manager)*
City of **Clawson** *(City Manager/Finance Director)*
City of **Farmington** *(City Manager)*
City of **Farmington Hills** *(Commander)*
City of **Fenton** *(City Manager)*
City of **Ferndale** *(City Manager)*
City of **Harper Woods** *(City Manager)*
City of **Huntington Woods** *(City Manager)*
City of **Keego Harbor** *(Interim City Manager)*
City of **Lathrup Village** *(City Administrator)*
City of **Livonia** *(Director of Administrative Services)*
City of **Mount Clemens** *(City Manager)*
City of **Northville** *(City Manager)*
City of **Plymouth** *(City Manager)*
City of **Pontiac** *(Mayor)*
City of **Riverview** *(City Manager/Treasurer)*
City of **Rochester** *(City Manager)*
City of **Rochester Hills** *(Mayor)*

City of **Romulus** *(Director of Community Outreach)*
City of **Royal Oak** *(City Manager)*
City of **South Lyon** *(Mayor)*
City of **Sylvan Lake** *(City Manager/Director of Public Safety)*
City of the **Village of Clarkston** *(City Manager)*
City of **Troy** *(Human Resources Director)*
City of **Wixom** *(City Manager)*

Township, Village, or other Local Government

Brandon Township *(Supervisor)*
Charter Township of **Commerce** *(Township Supervisor)*
Charter Township of **Harrison** *(Supervisor)*
Groveland Township *(Township Supervisor)*
Independence Township *(Supervisor)*
Macomb Township *(Director, Human Resources)*
Springfield Township *(Township Supervisor)*

Macomb County *(Director, Health & Community Services)*
Oakland County *(Deputy Director, Human Resources)*
Oakland County Homeland Security *(Manager)*

Village of **Beverly Hills** *(Village Manager)*
Village of **Bingham Farms** *(Clerk/Administrator)*
Village of **Holly** *(Village Manager)*

Nonprofit Agency

Accounting Aid Society *(Director, Operations and Process Improvement)*
Camp Fire Southeast Michigan *(CEO)*
Catholic Youth Organization *(Executive Director)*
Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation *(President and CEO)*
Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan *(President)*
Detroit PAL *(Director of Program Administration)*
Lutheran Social Services of Michigan *(CEO)*
Paws With A Cause *(CEO)*
St.Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center *(Executive Director/CEO)*
Teen HYPE *(Communications and Public Relations Manager)*
World Medical Relief, Inc. *(Director, Local Programs)*

Health Care Organization

Beaumont Health System *(SVP and CHRO)*
Beaumont Health System Foundation *(VP Operations)*
Detroit Medical Center *(CAO)*

Henry Ford Macomb Hospitals *(President and CEO)*
HFHS *(President and CEO)*
McLaren Macomb Hospital *(President and CEO)*
McLaren Oakland *(President and CEO)*
Oakwood Hospital - Dearborn *(President)*
Spectrum Human Services *(Office Admin)*
St. John Providence Health System *(COO)*
St. Joseph Mercy Oakland *(CNO)*
Troy Beaumont *(VP, COO)*

Macomb County Environmental Health Division *(Associate Director)*
Macomb County Health Department *(Planning and Quality Assurance Manager)*
Macomb County Health Department *(Medical Director)*
Macomb County Health Department *(Director, Family Health Services Division)*

Sheriff, Police, or other Criminal Justice Agency

Birmingham Police Department *(Deputy Chief of Police)*
Bloomfield Hills Public Safety *(Director of Public Safety)*
Franklin-Bingham Farms Police Department *(Chief of Police)*
Grosse Pointe Woods DPS *(Director of Public Safety)*
Hazel Park Police Department *(Chief of Police)*
Roseville Police Department *(Chief of Police)*
Utica Police Department *(Chief of Police)*
Warren Police Department *(Office Assistant)*
White Lake Township Police Department *(Chief of Police)*

Macomb County Sheriff's Office *(Sheriff)*
Michigan Department of Corrections *(Supervisor)*
Oakland County Sheriff *(Lieutenant)*
Oakland County Sheriff's Office - Satellites Division *(Captain)*

Court Administration or Other Legal Agency

6th Circuit Court Administration *(Supervisor, Administrative Services)*
14A District Court *(Court Administrator)*
16th Circuit, Macomb Probate, 42nd District Court *(Court Administrator)*
17th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
31st Circuit Court *(Court Administrator)*
31st District Court *(Court Administrator)*
35th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
37th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
38th District Court *(Magistrate/Court Administrator)*
41B District Court *(Court Administrator)*
43rd District Court *(Court Administrator)*
43rd District Court - Hazel Park *(Court Administrator)*

44th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
45th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
46th District Court *(Court Administrator/Magistrate)*
47th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
50th District Court *(Court Administrator)*
51st District Court *(Court Administrator)*
52-1 District Court *(Deputy Administrator)*
52nd 1st Division District Court *(Court Administrator)*
David J. Kramer Law Firm, PLLC *(Assistance to Partners and Special Projects)*
Genesee County Probate Court *(Court Administrator/Register)*
Macomb County Probate Court *(Deputy Court Administrator/Register)*
Mungo At Law *(Office Manager)*
Oakland County Probate Court *(Probate Court Administrator)*
State Appellate Defender Office *(Human Resources Manager)*
Third Circuit Court *(Court Administrator)*
Washtenaw County Trial Court *(Administrator)*

Executive Summary

1. The key focus for this study lies in the answers to Questions 10-15, i.e., the identification of the skill sets employers seek in relation to those imparted through our MPA curriculum. **Decision making/ problem solving skills** were found as the most important by nearly 90% of our respondents, followed by **leadership** (73%) and **budget preparation and administration** (62%; see p. 19).

   There was some variation in the findings dependent upon the type of organization (roughly corresponding to our concentrations) and a few additional skills were strongly desired by many respondents (see p. 20)**:**

   LGM: supervision of subordinates, strategic planning, program implementation/service delivery
   NPM: performance measurement/program evaluation, strategic planning, program development
   HCA: supervision of subordinates, strategic planning, program implementation/service delivery
   CJL: supervision of subordinates, conflict resolution, citizen participation
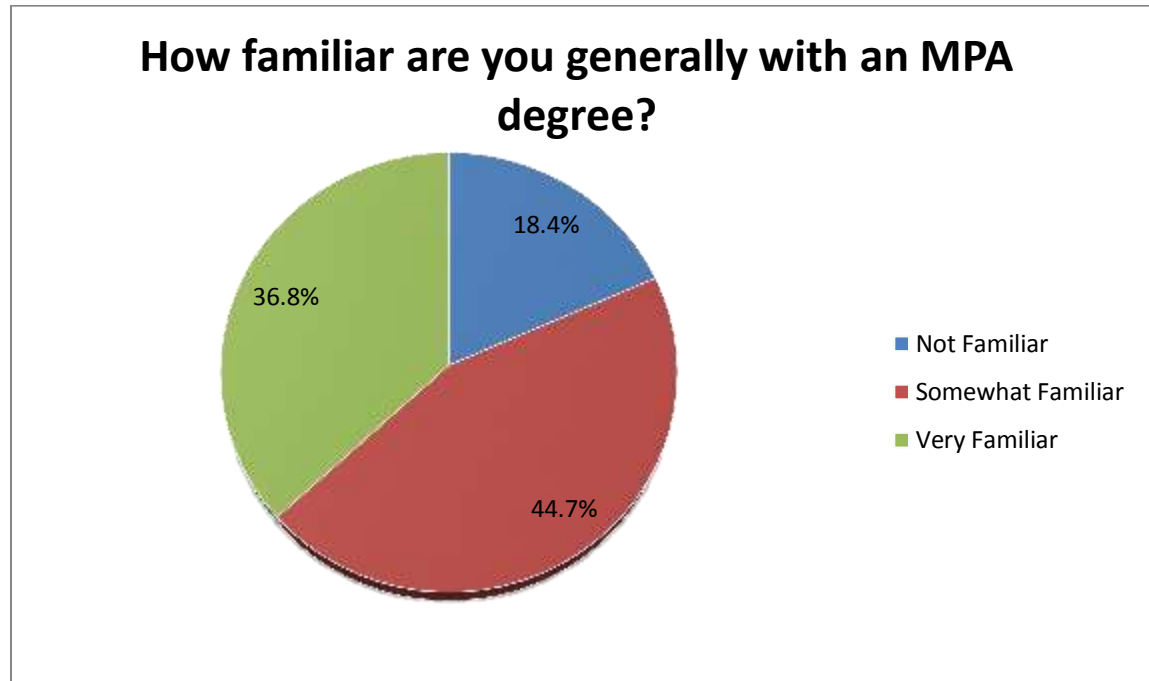   **CA**: supervision of subordinates, strategic planning, conflict resolution, teamwork

   The issue of supervision of subordinates echoes findings from the previous MPA Employer survey in 2009. The continued focus on budgeting and program evaluation as part of our current core curriculum is reinforced here. In contrast, media relations/program marketing and agency/program advocacy and lobbying, fall towards the bottom of these lists. Assuming that our curriculum (and NASPAA) is not misaligned, we must emphasize the application of these skills for attaining and maintaining funding, successful program marketing, and gaining public interest in program activity, if the listed skills are to remain in the core.

2. The nonprofit and health care respondents exhibit significantly less certainty about the value of the MPA than their local government counterparts (see p. 24). Several examples: 18% of NPM types say they are uncertain about whether the MPA increases an employee's upward mobility, 36% say the mobility would be the same, and 27% said there would be more upward mobility for an employee with an MPA degree. 31% of health care types say that employees with the MPA will be assigned greater responsibility than others in their organizations, 56% say the mobility would be the same and only 6% were uncertain (see p. 24). 54% of our NPM respondents say they expect better performance of those possessing the MPA relative to that of other workers while 27% percent are unsure about the level of performance of those possessing the MPA degree versus that of others workers. Indeed, the MPA ranks third in perceived value (i.e., behind, the MBA and MSW) among the nonprofits represented here, and it ranks second**,** with the same value as the MSW, (behind the Masters of Public Health) for the health care organizations (see p. 15). The results should be put into perspective after taking into consideration the variation in the number of respondents in each organization category**.**

3. 82% of those working in non-profits and health care say they are somewhat or very familiar with the MPA in general and 18% stated they are unfamiliar (see p.11). However, 70% of <u>all</u> respondents indicate that they are unfamiliar with the OU MPA program, and those numbers are in the 60-70% range for three of the five of the organizations surveyed here (see p.13). Surprisingly, those surveyed from the nonprofit sector and not local governments were the most familiar specifically with OU's MPA program. The lower rate of recognition from the other organizations reinforces the need for further marketing and outreach in terms of promoting the program locally.

Findings

How familiar are you generally with an MPA degree?

18.4%

36.8%

44.7%

- Not Familiar
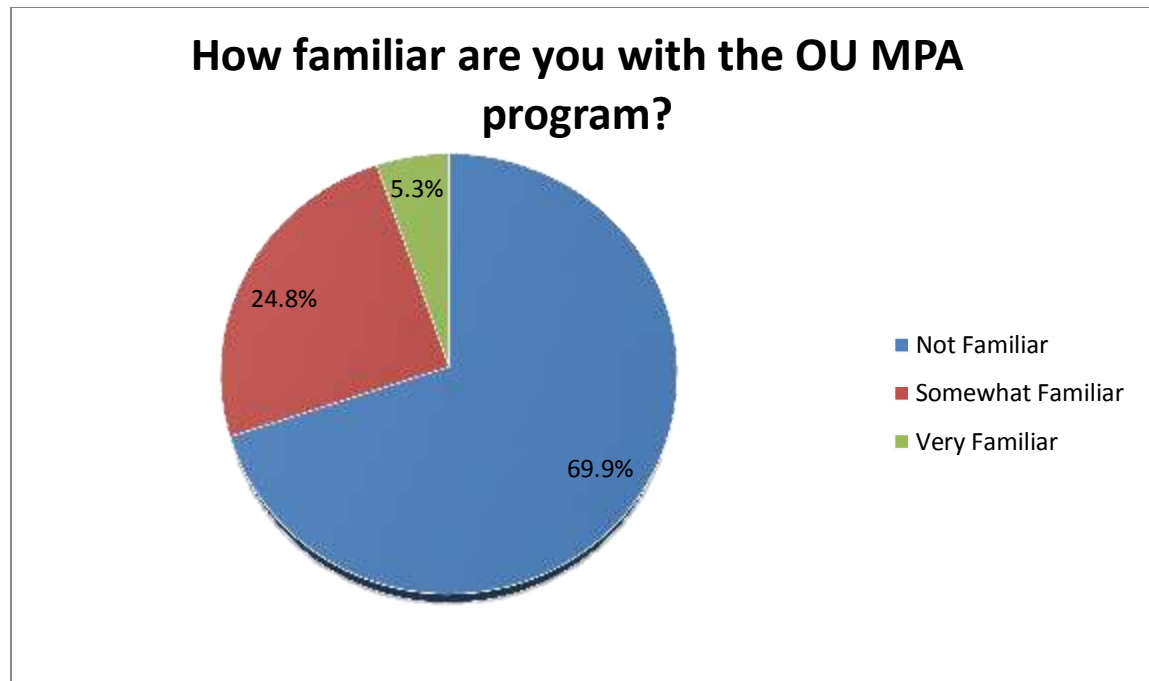- Somewhat Familiar
- Very Familiar

114 respondents out of one 117 (97%) answered the question "How familiar are you generally with the MPA degree?" 18.42% responded that they are not familiar with an MPA degree. 44.74% responded that they are somewhat familiar with an MPA degree. Additionally, 36.84% reported that they are very familiar with the degree.

Out of 28 City Government responses, 3% reported that they are not familiar with the degree, the lowest number among all types of organizations participated in the survey. 39% and 57% (correspondingly) reported that they are somewhat and very familiar with the degree. Out of 32 Court Administrations' responses, one third (31%) responded that they are not familiar with the degree. 34% answered that they are somewhat familiar with an MPA degree, and finally; 34% responded that they are very familiar with the degree. Health Care Organizations had 14 responses to this question. 14% of Health Care organizations answered that they are not familiar with an MPA degree. 71% reported that they are somewhat familiar with the degree and 14% stated that they are very familiar with the degree. Out of 11 nonprofit organizations, 18% stated that they are not familiar with an MPA degree, 45% are somewhat familiar and 36% reported that they are very familiar with the degree. The law enforcement category reported 14 answers to this question. 21% of respondents in this category reported that they are not familiar with the MPA program, 57% are somewhat familiar and 21% are very familiar with the degree. Finally, out of 14 responses from the local government category, 29% stated that they are not familiar with the degree. 43% reported that they are somewhat familiar and 29% states that they are very familiar with the degree.
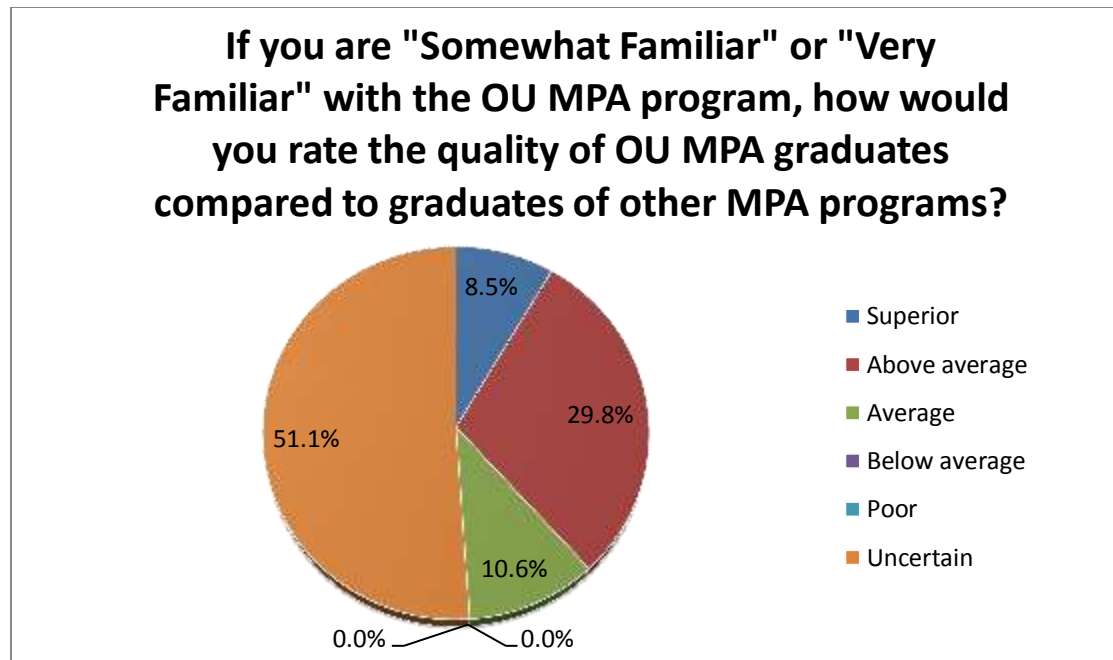
If you are generally "Somewhat Familiar" or "Very Familiar" with an MPA degree, which of the following applies to you?
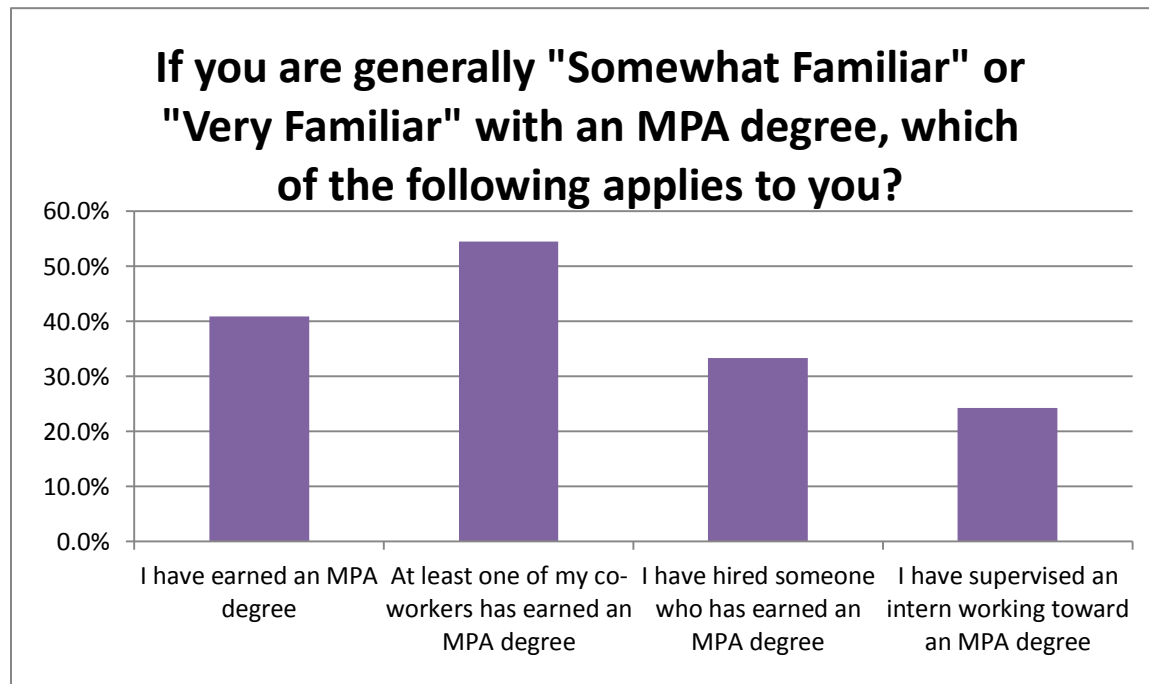
66 out of 117 (56.41%) organizations answered the question "If you are generally "Somewhat Familiar" or "Very Familiar" with an MPA degree, which of the following applies to you?" Out of the responses, 40.91% stated that they have earned an MPA degree, 55.54% have at least one coworker who has earned an MPA degree, 33.33% have hired someone with an MPA degree and 24.24% have supervised an intern working toward an MPA degree.

Out of the responses 2 out of 16 (12.5%) health care organizations, 7 out of 33 (21%) court administration or other legal system agencies, 4 out of 13 (31%%) sheriff, police or other criminal justice agencies, 2 out of 14 (14%) township, village, or other local governments, and 12 out of 28 (43%) city government respondents have earned an MPA degree. Further, 10 out of 28 (36%) city governments, 11 out of 33 (33.33%) court administration or other legal system agencies, 5 out of 16 (31%) health care organizations, 1 out of 11 (9%) nonprofit agencies, 5 out of 13 (38%) sheriff, police or other criminal justice agencies, and 5 out of 14 (38%) township, village, or other local governments reported at least one of the coworkers with an MPA degree. 7 out of 28 (25%) city governments, 6 out of 33 (18%) court administration or other legal system agencies, 3 out of 16 (19%) health care organizations, 1 out of 11 (9%) nonprofit agencies, 2 out of 13 (15%) sheriff, police or other criminal justice agencies, and 3 out of 14 (21%) local government respondents reported to have hired someone with an MPA degree. Finally, some organizations reported supervising an intern working toward an MPA degree including 5 out of 28 (18%) city governments, 4 out of 33 (12%) court administration or other legal system agencies, 3 out of 16 (19%) health care organizations, 0 out of 11 nonprofit agencies, and 2 out of 14 (14%) local government respondents.
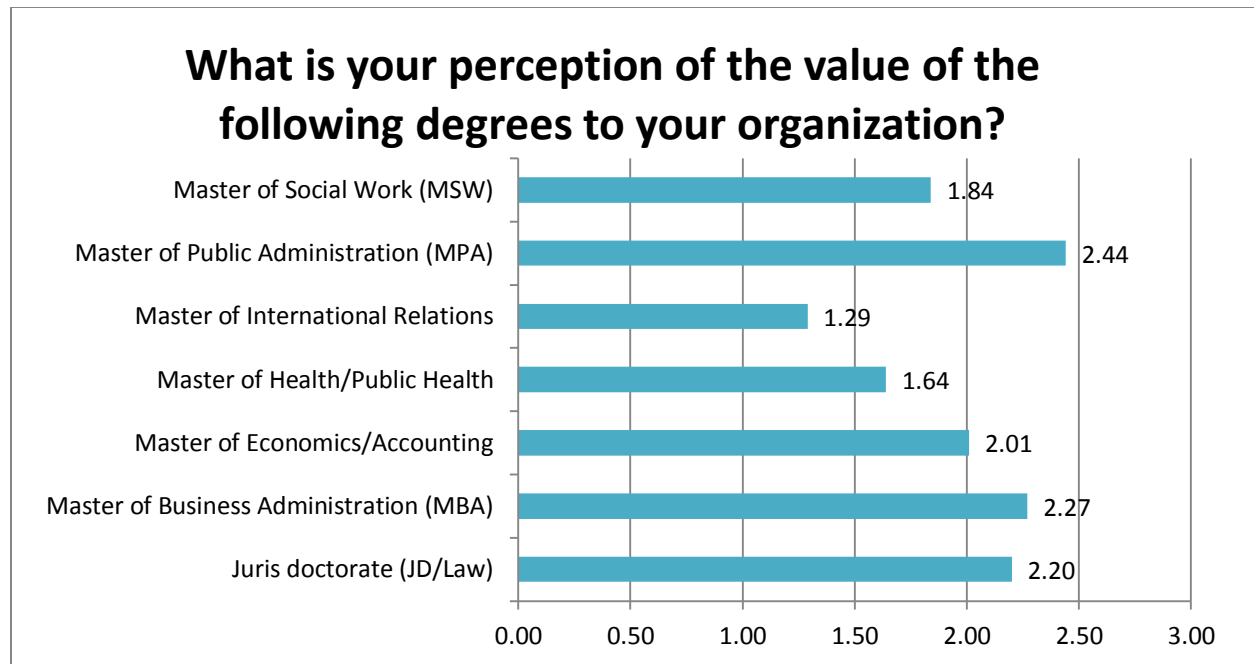
How familiar are you with the OU MPA program?

5.3%

24.8%

69.9%

- Not Familiar
- Somewhat Familiar
- Very Familiar

The response rate for question six "How familiar are you with the OU MPA program?" was more than adequate. Only four respondents skipped this question, leaving 113 responses out of 117 (96.58%). The majority of respondents had a lack of familiarity with the OU MPA program by nearly 70%. The respondents who had some knowledge or contact with the OU MPA program were as follows: 24.78% answered with being "somewhat familiar" and only 5.31% answered with being "very familiar" with the OU MPA program. Respondents being "not familiar" outweighs the respondents who were either "somewhat familiar" or "very familiar" by 39.82%. Therefore, only a combined 30.09% of respondents had either some or were very familiar with the OU MPA program.

When disaggregating the data the results are as follows: Sheriff/police or other criminal justice agency and court administration or other legal system agency have the least familiarity with the OU MPA program compared to the other organizations—83% and 81% correspondingly are "not familiar" with the OU MPA program. Not surprisingly, these organizations: court administration or other legal system agency (18.75%) and sheriff/police or other criminal justice agency (16.6%) are only "somewhat familiar" and/or "very familiar" with the OU MPA program. The organization with some type of familiarity whether it be "somewhat familiar" or "very familiar" with the OU MPA program is the organization of nonprofit agency. Nonprofit agency had more than half (54.54%) of their respondents with either some type of familiarity or very familiar with the OU MPA program. Organizations of city government (39.2%); township, village, or other local government (35.7%); and health care organization (25%) appear to fall within the middle when ranking all the organizations in regards to having somewhat to very familiarity with the OU MPA program.

If you are "Somewhat Familiar" or "Very Familiar" with the OU MPA program, how would you rate the quality of OU MPA graduates compared to graduates of other MPA programs?
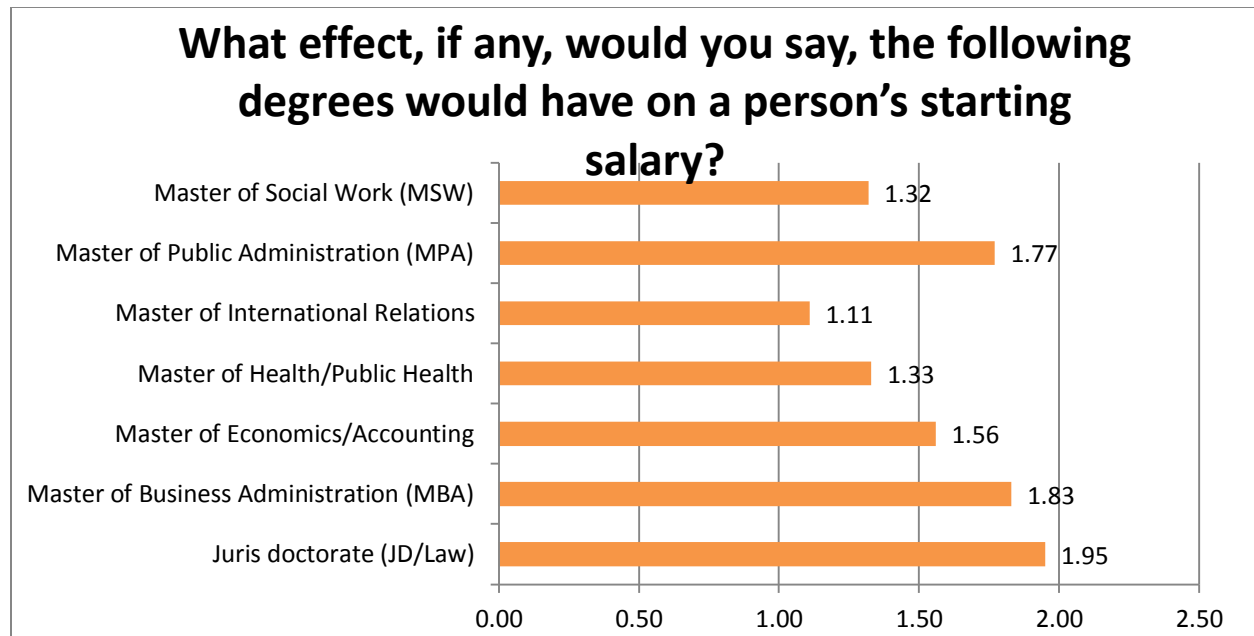

The response rate for question seven "If you are "Somewhat Familiar" or "Very Familiar" with the OU MPA program, how would you rate the quality of OU MPA graduates compared to graduates of other MPA programs?" had a lower response rate (40.17% or 47 out of 117), due to majority of respondents skipping the question. The majority of respondents felt uncertain (51.06%) in regards to the quality of OU MPA graduates compared to graduates of other MPA programs. The second highest response for the survey question was respondents felt that OU MPA graduates rate "above average" (29.79%) compared to graduates of other MPA programs. "Average" (10.64%) and "superior" (8.51%) responses resulted in closer percentages, but are still positive responses compared to zero responses resulting in "below average" and "poor".

It is worth noting that more answers are recorded in this question than those who said they are somewhat or very familiar with the OU MPA combined in the previous question. Possibly, those who are unfamiliar with the OU MPA have inflated the "Uncertain" answer choice. When the responses are disaggregated by the type of organizations, the results are as follows: The organization that rated highest quality with OU MPA program graduates being "superior" compared to graduates of other MPA programs was nonprofit agency (28.5%). However, nonprofit agency had also the highest response rate in regards to the "Uncertain" category (42.8%). The second highest rating was "above average" and the following organizations had this answer as the most common response rate: township, village, or other local government (57.4%); health care organization (40%); court administration or other legal system agency (33.3%); and city government (28.5%). The response rate for "average" was 0 for court administration or other legal system agency, township, village, or other local government, and sheriff/police or other criminal justice agency all had a zero response rate for "average".

What is your perception of the value of the following degrees to your organization?

Degree	Value
Master of Social Work (MSW)	1.84
Master of Public Administration (MPA)	2.44
Master of International Relations	1.29
Master of Health/Public Health	1.64
Master of Economics/Accounting	2.01
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	2.27
Juris doctorate (JD/Law)	2.20

When asked how valuable that professionals feel certain degrees are to their organizations, the Master of Public Administration degree was rated as 'extremely valuable' by 59 out of 109 respondents (54%). As compared to the other degrees (JD/Law, Master of Business Administration, Master of Accounting/Economics, Master of Health/Public Health, Master of International Relations, and Master of Social Work) that respondents were given to rate, the MPA degree was most frequently deemed 'extremely valuable.' Another 39% of respondents felt that the degree was at least 'somewhat valuable' to their organization. Only 5 out of 109 respondents (4.5%) rated the MPA degree as 'not valuable.'
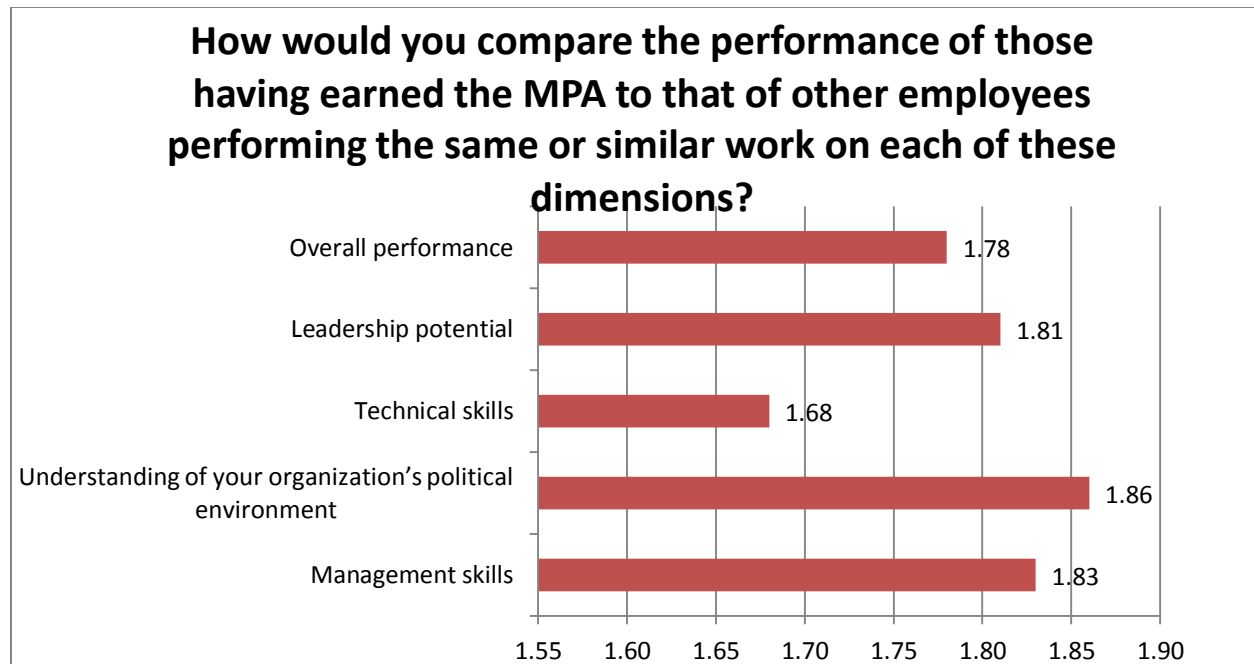
When disaggregated by organization type, city and township government, sheriff and police, and court professionals all highlighted the MPA degree as being the most valuable to their organizations. Each of these groups of professionals also included that the JD/Law degree is also very valuable. Non-profit and health professionals frequently indicated that the Master of Social Work degree is highly valuable to their organization types. Additionally, the health professional respondents also highly valued the Master of Health/Public Health degree.

What effect, if any, would you say, the following degrees would have on a person's starting salary?

Degree	Value
Master of Social Work (MSW)	1.32
Master of Public Administration (MPA)	1.77
Master of International Relations	1.11
Master of Health/Public Health	1.33
Master of Economics/Accounting	1.56
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	1.83
Juris doctorate (JD/Law)	1.95

113 respondents out of 117 (96.6%) answered the question about the effect of different types of degrees on a person's starting salary. The Juris doctorate (JD/Law) had the strongest overall weighted average of 1.95, meaning according to the aggregate results of this survey, those who have a JD would earn the highest starting salary. This was followed by Master of Business Administration (MBA) (1.83), Master of Public Administration (MPA) (1.77), Master of Economics/Accounting (1.56), Master of Health/Public Health (1.33), Master of Social Work (MSW) (1.32), and Master of International Relations (1.11).

Court administration organizations were the ones that valued the JD degree the most. The vast majority of these organizations responded with "extremely valuable" in reference to the JD degree. Health care organizations were the ones that valued the master of health the most with the majority of these organizations responding with "extremely valuable" in reference to the master of health degree. The master of business administration degree was moderately valued amongst all of the different types of organizations. The master of public administration was most valued amongst all of the different organizations with it being "extremely valuable" to nearly all of the city and local government organizations. Of all of the degrees mentioned in the survey, the master of international relations was the least valuable based upon all of the responses given.
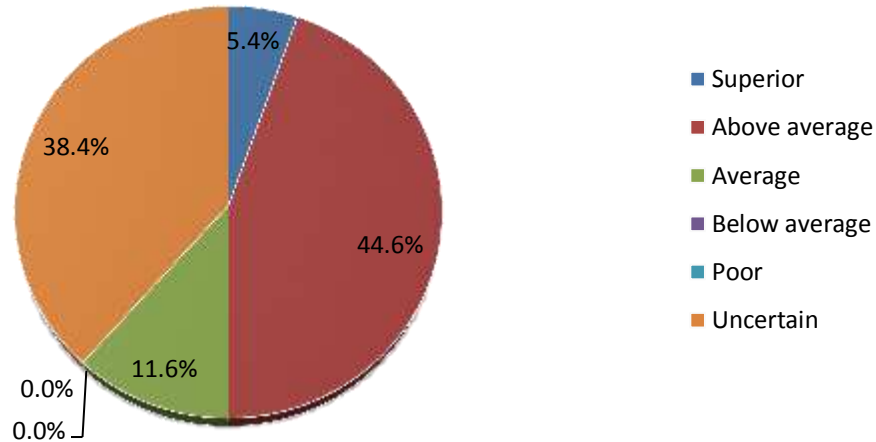
How would you compare the performance of those having earned the MPA to that of other employees performing the same or similar work on each of these dimensions?

Dimension	Value
Overall performance	1.78
Leadership potential	1.81
Technical skills	1.68
Understanding of your organization's political environment	1.86
Management skills	1.83

(Scale: 1.55, 1.60, 1.65, 1.70, 1.75, 1.80, 1.85, 1.90)

110 respondents out of 117 (94%) answered the question, "How would you compare the performance of those having earned the MPA to that of other employees performing the same or similar work on each of these dimensions?" 51 out of 109 (47%) respondents agreed that personnel with a MPA degree demonstrated managerial skills and understanding of the organization's political environment superior to their peers, followed by overall performance (46%), leadership potential (45%), and technical skills (34%). While 37 out of 110 (34%) respondents believed that personnel with MPA degrees attained the same attributes for technical skills, followed by leadership potential (24%), understanding the organization's political environment (23%), management skills (21%), and overall performance (21%) as their counterparts, they were unsure of their skill set at overall performance (34%), technical skills (33%), leadership potential (32%), management skills (31%), and understanding the organization's political environment (30%).
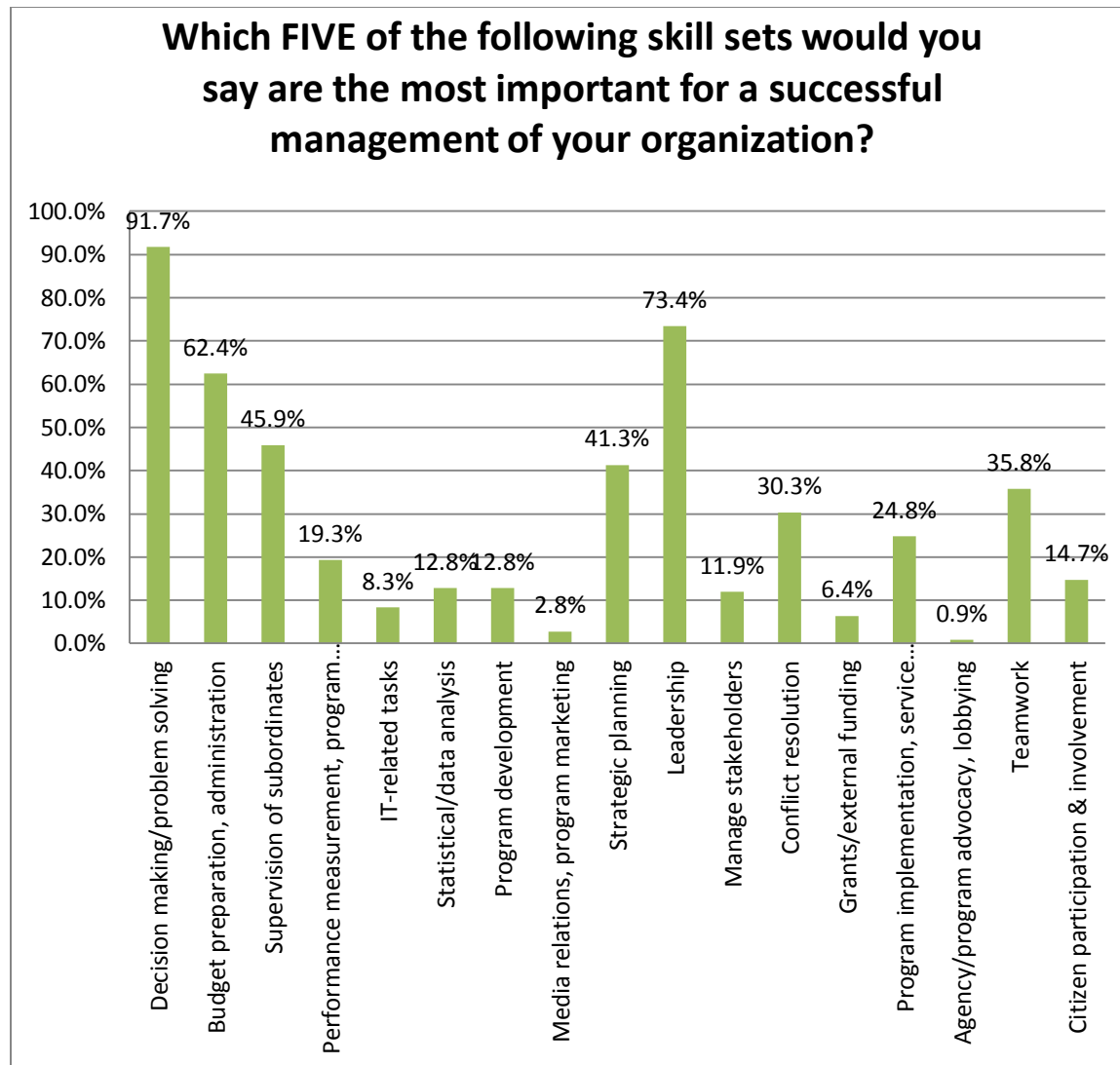
When disaggregated by the type of organization, city governments highlighted management skills, understanding the organization's political environment, leadership potential, and overall performance as area of expertise that MPA personnel excelled at compared to court administration organizations, which particularly valued management and overall performance skills: a minority (less than 1%), reported that MPA performance of management skills as either "extremely important" or "somewhat valuable". Healthcare organizations and nonprofit organizations valued understanding the organization's political environment; with the latter additionally emphasizing leadership potential. However, in the field of criminal justice, the respondents viewed MPA and non MPA personnel almost virtually equal in all aspects except management skills and overall performance.

How would you rate the general performance of employees with an MPA degree compared to their co-workers?

Legend:
- Superior
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Poor
- Uncertain

Pie chart values: 5.4%, 44.6%, 11.6%, 0.0%, 0.0%, 38.4%

112 respondents out of 117 (73%) answered the question about how they would rate the general performance of employees with an MPA degree compared to their co-workers. Above average was selected as the top rating by 50 out of the 112 respondents, which is 45%. This was followed by uncertain (38%), average (12%) and superior (5%). Below average and poor were not chosen by any of our respondents.

When disaggregated by the type of organization, local government administrations had the most responses for above average, which indicates that they have a better understanding of how someone with an MPA degree performs, compared to others. On the contrary, Local government also had the highest response in the uncertain category, along with court administrations. This could be because they do not have employees with MPA degrees, so they are unable to make comparisons. Healthcare organizations had responses in each of the four categories, but had the highest amount of responses in the above average category. Criminal justice had the most responses in the average category and nonprofit organizations had most of their responses in the above average category.

Which FIVE of the following skill sets would you say are the most important for a successful management of your organization?

Question twelve had 109 respondents out of 117 (93%) who answered the question about what skill sets would be the most important for a successful management in their organization. Out of 17 different skill sets, one in particular stood out more than all the rest with a 91.74% response rate; Decision making/problem solving. The next skill set that had the most responses came in at 73.39%, almost 20% difference, was leadership, followed by budget preparation and administration at 62.29%, supervision of subordinates at 45.87%, and strategic planning at 41.28% rounding out the top five responses for the most important skill sets for management in their organizations.

Breaking up the respondents into their five organization types; LGM, NPM, HCA, CJL, and CA we will find which skills each organizational type values most. When disaggregated by the type of organization, local government administrations, 43 respondents, highlighted: decision making/ problem solving (93%), budget preparation and administration (70%), leadership (67%), strategic planning (49%), and teamwork (44%) as being the top five most

important skills. Nonprofit management, 11 respondents, highlighted: decision making/ problem solving (64%), leadership (64%), budget preparation and administration (55%), performance measurement (55%), and strategic planning (55%) as the most important skills. Healthcare administration, 16 respondents, highlighted: decision making/ problem solving (75%), leadership (69%), program implementation/delivery service (44%), budget preparation and administration (38%), and supervision of subordinates (31%) as being the top five most important skills. Criminal justice, 13 respondents, highlighted: leadership (100%), supervision of subordinates (92%), decision making/problem solving (85%), conflict resolution (62%), and citizen participation (46%) as the most important skills. Court administration, 33 respondents, highlighted: decision making/problem solving (91%), budget preparation and administration (64%), leadership (61%), supervision of subordinates (49%), and a three-way tie for strategic planning/ conflict resolution/ teamwork (33%) as the most important skills for their organizations.

What other skill sets NOT listed above would you say are important for a successful management of your organization?

Question thirteen had 37 respondents out of 117 (32%) who answered the question about what skills were not listed in question twelve that are also important to their organization. Filtering out the responses that could fall into the skills under question twelve, there are five skills that have some repetition across the respondents: communication (22%), time management (8%), patience (8%), common sense (5%), and organization (5%).

While these top five responses have no direct correlation to their corresponding employer groups because of the small number of similar responses, there is one skill that stands out the most: communication. Communication was the most frequent response at 22%, all but one of the responses came from the local government group. While the local government group expressed their desire for strong communication skills, this skill would be desirable through all five of the employer groupings.

In general, which THREE of the following attributes would you say are the most important to a hiring decision in your organization?
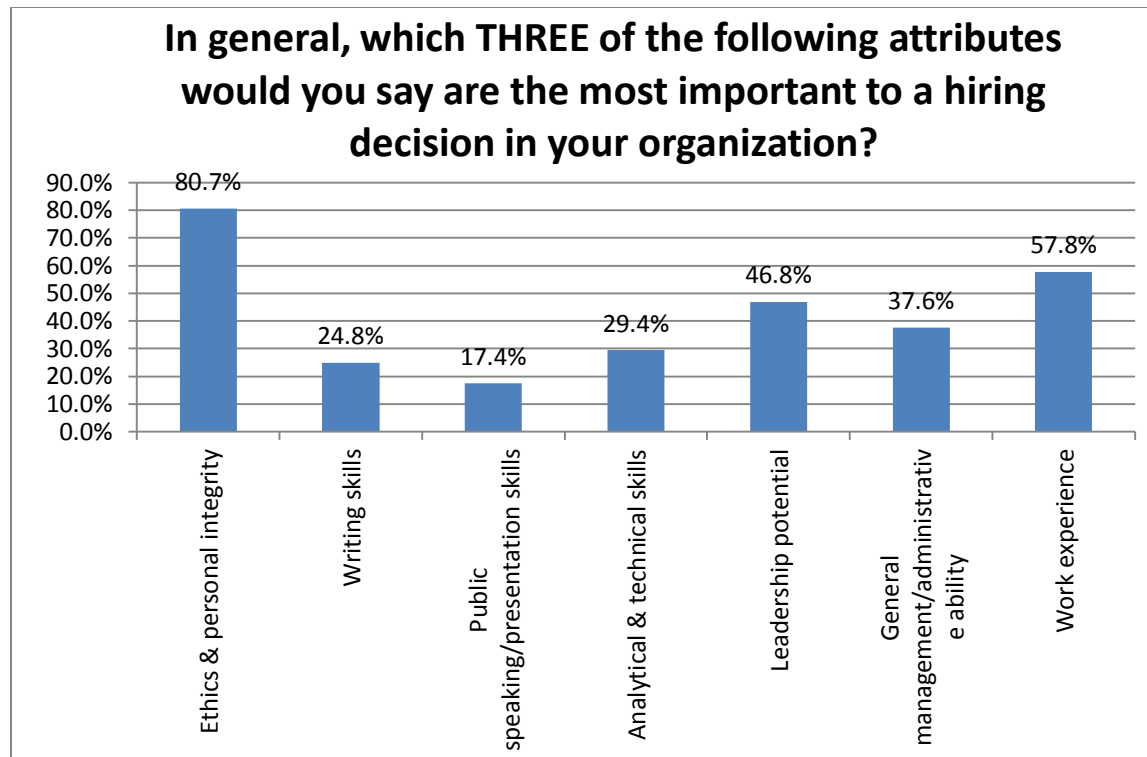
109 respondents out of 117 (93%) answered the question about which attributes are the most important to a hiring decision. The top three attributes that influence our respondents hiring decision are: Ethics & personal integrity, work experience and leadership potential. Ethics & personal integrity were selected as the most important attributes by nearly 81% of our respondents followed by work experience (58%) and leadership potential (47 %). Employers placed a lesser degree of emphasis on the following attributes when it comes to hiring. For instance, 38 % of respondents prefer general management/administrative ability, followed by analytical & technical skills (29%), writing skills (25%) and speaking or presentative skills (17%).

When examined by the type of organization, city government administrators highlighted ethics & personal integrity and work experience followed by general management/administrative ability as being the top three most important attributes compared to court administrators, which indicated the same first two attributes ethics & personal integrity, work experience, followed by leadership potential and general management/administrative ability which are placed the same value in their field. Health care executives and executives of nonprofit organizations selected ethics & personal integrity, leadership potential and work experience as the top three attributes. Sheriff, police or other criminal justice agency picked ethics & personal integrity as the number one attribute that they look into hiring new employees, followed by work experience and writing skills, while township, village, or other local government organization's executives highlighted ethics & personal integrity, general management/administrative ability, and work experience.

What other attributes NOT listed above would you say are important to the hiring decision in your organization?
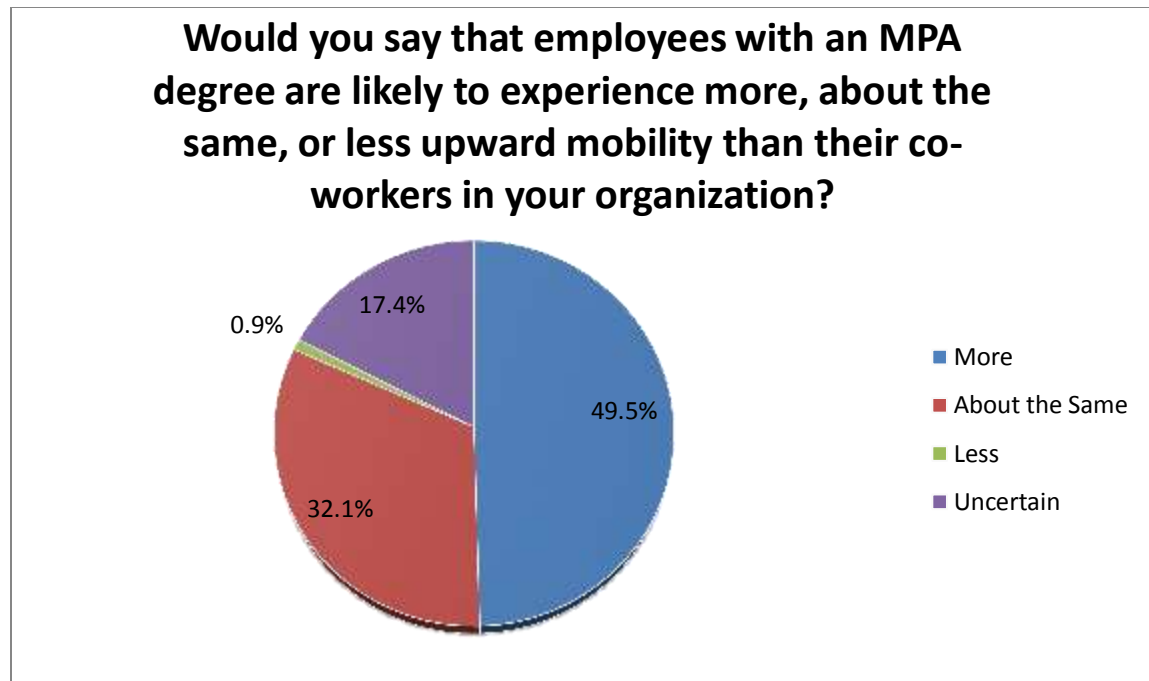
Responses to the open question, "What other attributes not listed above would you say are important to the hiring decision in your organization" were very interesting. To shed light to this topic, 117 employers were surveyed, from whom 38 individuals or 32% decided to reply to this question. Employers emphasized teamwork, communication skills and positive attitude as three other important qualities that they are looking in hiring new employees.

If we categorize employers by their type of organization, city government administrators highlighted teamwork, professionalism and maturity as being the other top three most important attributes compared to court administrators, which indicated that positive attitude and communication are valued in their field. Health care executives selected social skills, service skills and alignment with organizational values as the qualities that they are looking in the hiring process while, executives of nonprofit agencies noted ability to work independently and alignment with organizational values. Employers of Sheriff, police or other criminal justice agency emphasized common sense, communication, team player skills and ability to think and reason through problems, while employers of township, village, or other local government highlighted positive attitude and ability to work with people, setting example for employees.

For what job titles in your organization would the MPA degree be the appropriate educational credential?

From the survey conducted 76 out of 117 have responded to the question "For what job titles would MPA degree is appropriate in one's organization?" The response rate is 73%, which is fair and considerable.

Specifically, 25% of the responded ranked job titles like Chief of Staff/Department Head/Office Manager/Director to be the most appropriate for candidates with MPA degrees. Court Administrator, Deputy Court Administrator or Director of Probation job titles were selected by 23.6% and City Manager positons ranked third with 20% considering MPA to be appropriate for those titles. Another field which gained notable number of respondents is finance/budgeting and/or fiscal director with 14.4% selecting this position as requiring an MPA degree. Generally, key leadership roles were emphasized by health care and nonprofit organizations as requiring an MPA degree. However, one comment from a health care organization was striking, noting that without prior experience, MPA degree is not enough.
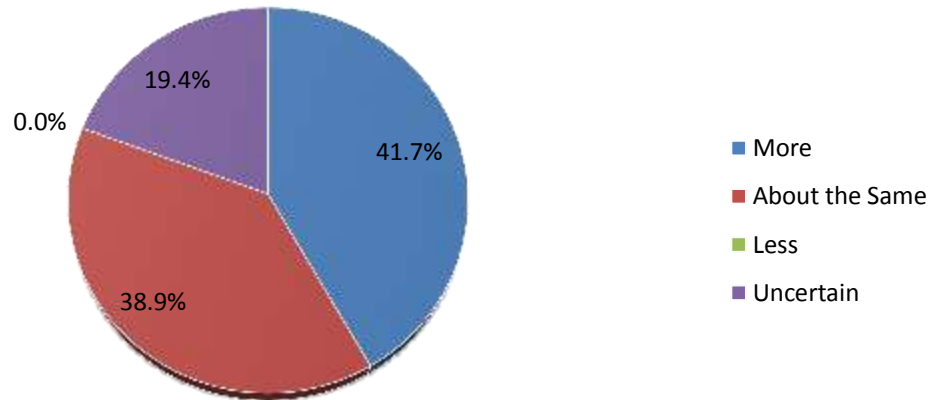
Would you say that employees with an MPA degree are likely to experience more, about the same, or less upward mobility than their co-workers in your organization?

As it relates to question 17, "Would you say that employees with an MPA degree are likely to experience more, about the same, or less upward mobility than their co-workers in your organization?," there were 109 professionals total who gave a response to this question.

There were 54 professionals who responded with the answer "more" which equates to 49.5% of the total. 35 professionals responded that those with an MPA will experience "about the same" level of upward mobility (32%). There were 19 respondents selected the "uncertain" answer choice (17%). Finally, less than 1% of respondents said that those with an MPA are likely to experience "less" upward mobility.

Among Local Governments (42% of all responses) 60% said that MPA graduate will experience more upward mobility and no responses were registered for the "less" category; whereas only 30% of nonprofit organizations (9% of all responses) foresee more upward mobility for MPA graduates. The majority (60%) of health care organizations assume about the same amount of upward mobility for those who hold an MPA degree (10% of all responses). Only 35%% of criminal justice administrations indicated that MPA graduates are likely to experience more upward mobility (9% of all responses), and 60% court administrations assume the same conclusion (28% of all responses).
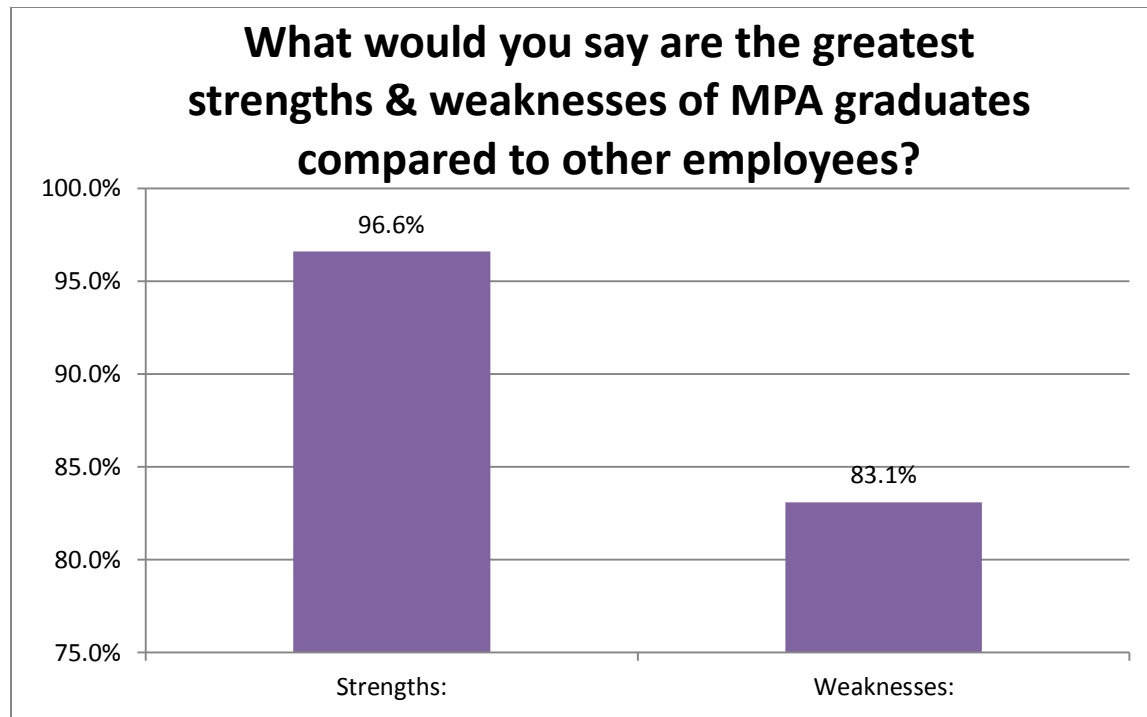
Would you say that employees with an MPA degree are assigned more, about the same, or less responsibility than their co-workers?

As it relates to question 18, "Would you say that employees with an MPA degree are assigned more, about the same, or less responsibility than their coworkers?" there were 108 professionals out of 117 (92%) who gave a response to this question.

There were 45 professionals who responded with the answer "more" and this equates to 41.67% of the total. 42 respondents (39%) indicated "about the same" amount of responsibilities assigned to an employee with an MPA degree. There were 21 professionals who are "uncertain" about the answer to the question (19%). Finally, there were no professionals that responded with the answer" less" responsibility will be assigned to an MPA graduate.

Among local government administrations 57% are expecting to see more responsibilities assigned to an MPA graduate; 48% of court administrations and only 7% of criminal justice agencies came to the same conclusion. The majority (61%) of criminal justice agencies assume an MPA graduate will be assigned about the same amount of responsibilities. As for nonprofit and health care organizations, 40% of nonprofit and the same percentage of health care organizations would say that employees with an MPA degree are assigned more responsibilities that their co-workers.

What would you say are the greatest strengths & weaknesses of MPA graduates compared to other employees?

Strengths: 96.6%
Weaknesses: 83.1%

When asked about the greatest strengths and weakness of MPA graduates compared to other employees, the collective responses are as follows: for strength, 57 of 59 or 96% responded, and for weaknesses, 49 of 59 or 83% responded.

A collective total of 42 common responses were looked at among the organizations for the "greatest strengths". The top (5) responses for the greatest strengths are as follows: 1) knowledge in field of study, 28%; 2) a tie between comprehension of the role as an MPA and management, each at 14%; 3) education, 12%; 4) analytical skills, 9% and 5) ties between communication, commitment and problem solving at 7%. A total of 23 common responses of weaknesses of MPA graduates compared to other employees are: 1) lack of real life work experience, 52%; 2) having a sense of "superiority" because of degree, 26% and the lack of organizational knowledge, 17%.

The Local Government Administration emphasizes knowledge of local government and problem solving skills as the greatest strengths. The weakness is the sense of "superiority" due to acquiring an MPA degree. For the Criminal Justice Administration strengths are comprehension from a global view point, more analytical thinking, better writing skills, project design, and public speaking. The weaknesses are application of knowledge learned and having a sense of "entitlement" by obtaining an MPA degree. The Court Administration emphasizes better understanding of the organization and management for strengths and no real life work experience in the field for weakness. From the Nonprofit Organization's perspective on strengths, the MPA graduate has initiative, knowledge of an NPO's practices in management

and resources, education, critical thinking and the ability to see the "big picture". The weaknesses are lack of real life experience, and having a single view of program's attributes.

Finally, the Health Administration points out the MPA graduate have diverse knowledge of issues outside the organization that affects healthcare and are quick learners. In weaknesses they included lack of knowledge of the organization itself, MPA graduates should be focused on delivery of healthcare services and businesses, and there maybe confusion with a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree.

Is there an MPA program, either locally or nationally, that you consider better than all others?

[pie chart]

- Yes — 9.3%
- No — 35.5%
- Uncertain — 55.1%
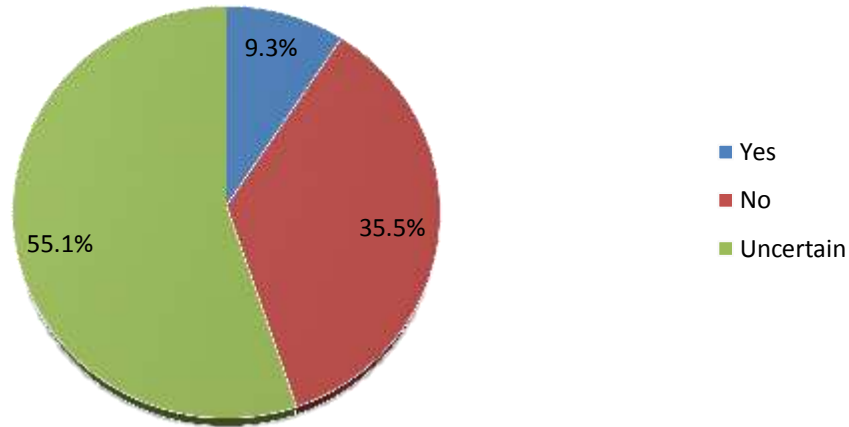
107 respondents out of 117 (91%) answered the question, "Is there an MPA program, either locally or nationally, that you consider better than all others?" 10 respondents out of 117 (9%) skipped the question.

59 of the 107 respondents that answered the question were "uncertain" (55%). 38 of the 107 respondents that answered the question selected "no" (35%). 10 of the 107 respondents that answered the question selected "yes" (9%).

When disaggregated, local government administrators largely concluded they were uncertain, with 22 respondents (20.56% of all respondents). 13 respondents concluded there was not and 5 concluded there was an MPA program they considered better (12% and 5%, respectively). Court administrators largely were uncertain, with 20 respondents (19%). 7 respondents selected "yes" and 3 selected "no" (6% and 3%). Health care organizations concluded an equal number of "uncertain" and "no" with 7 respondents for both (6% each). There were no "yes" responses. The majority of nonprofit agencies responded as "no" with 6 (5%). There were 4 "uncertain" responses (4%) and there were no "yes" responses. Finally, Sheriffs, local police and other criminal justice agencies responded with 6 "uncertain", 5 "no" and 2 "yes" (5%, 4%, and 2%, respectively).

Five of the local government administrators added these comments along with stating that they did consider an MPA program to be better than all others:

- I am graduate of the MPA Program at Oakland University and recommend it frequently.
- University of Austin, Arizona State University, and Kansas State University all have nationally known MPA programs.

- University of North Carolina, University of Kansas
- University of Kansas - local government management
- University of Kansas

One that did not choose a response and one that was uncertain added these comments:

- We have a very active intern program and have dealt with students from OU, WSU, UM, MSU, CMU, and other programs. I have not noted that students from any of these are clearly better prepared than the others.
- Attended Central Michigan University MPA program

Two of the court administrators added these comments along with stating that they did consider an MPA program to be better than all others:

- While not specifically an MPA, I believe the National Center for State Courts Institute for Court Management's Court Executive Fellow Degree is the pinnacle in court executive training.
- The MPA Program at OU of course!

One of the health care organizations that responded with uncertainty added this comment:

- Just not that familiar with MPA programs on the national level

Two sheriff, police or other criminal justice agencies added these comments along with stating that they did consider an MPA program to be better than all others:

- Central Michigan University
- Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.

One sheriff, police or other criminal justice agency added this comment along with stating they did NOT consider an MPA program to be better than all others:

- Important - DO NOT LIKE all these "on-line" master's schools from all over. I think they are nothing more than "degree mills" with very little substance. How are we as employers expected to gauge the credibility of some "on-line" degree from some out of state educational institution? I prefer in-state programs that I am familiar with and can check the validity of before giving the employee credit for an advanced degree.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The OU MPA program could improve on marketing the program to potential employers or at least increase general marketing. This could not only help with employers becoming more acclimated with the program, but also help increase interest for potential students interested in an MPA degree. OU MPA program as well could meet/send information to employers, especially their human resources department and provide information about the benefits of the program for their employees. This approach would be more a grass roots efforts, rather than doing regional marketing such as radio or television commercials/billboards.

Court administration and criminal justice especially lack familiarity with the OU MPA program. This could be due to these two organizations being newer concentrations within the OU MPA program. Therefore, a larger focus could be placed on these two organizations in order to increase awareness/familiarity and show the benefits of employers having an OU MPA degree. Another suggestion is that more efforts by the OU MPA program could be made with informing organizations of city government, health care, and township, village, or other local government. This is due to these organizations being within the middle of familiarity with the OU MPA program and has room for improvement for increasing employers' familiarity of the OU MPA program.

The OU MPA program seems to be on the right track in regards to quality of graduates as seen from the question 7 of the survey. However, the level of uncertainty could be decreased. Decreasing uncertainty could mean increasing marketing for the OU MPA program and setting performance standards of quality for the OU MPA program being above average/superior versus other MPA programs. If the goal for the OU MPA program is to have employers believe that graduates are "above average" or "superior" compared to other MPA graduates, then respondents answered that this is 38.3% accurate in regards to the sample. However, a lot of uncertainty for respondents has taken up the majority of the response rate.

Looking over the data, it is clear that there is a clear consistence of the top five responses that follow across all the employer groups; decision making, budget preparation and administration, leadership, supervision of subordinates, and strategic planning. The MPA program at Oakland University must emphasize their application of such skills in their curriculum if they are to remain current with employers' needs. While the MPA program at Oakland University does offer classes that expand on these skills, that are program requirements, it is important that these courses constantly evolve to current employer demands on what is expected from an MPA student.

Oakland University should pay close attention in educating ethics in the MPA program in order to meet with employers 'preferences in hiring new employees. Currently the MPA program at

Oakland University offers only one elective subject on ethics. One recommendation based on the results of the survey and on the need to prepare graduate students with a solid foundation in ethics would be to offer the class on ethics as a requirement course. Another recommendation to meet with the demand of employers in hiring qualified graduate with working experience would be to offer more internship opportunities for graduate students. In addition, The MPA program should provide more network opportunities for graduate students to meet with potential employers and grow their leadership skills.

An increasingly sophisticated set of communication skills will be needed in the 21st century work place; so it is critical that Oakland University identify those components and skills sets that will best serve the future public administrators, and align communication skills of graduate students. In order to cultivate teamwork skills of MPA graduate, Oakland University should incorporate group projects as part of every course.

In conclusion, based upon the aggregate figures and each organization's responses to the survey question, Oakland's MPA program appears to show that graduates in their field of study have displayed knowledge and skills needed to do the job. However, the identified weaknesses from the responses show there is a lack of real life experience, a lack of applications of knowledge to real life problems and having knowledge about the organization itself and their functions. These weaknesses seem to restrain the graduate from being able to perform to their fullest potential. Oakland's MPA program can help the students acknowledge these weaknesses and help students strive to meet them by incorporating real life scenarios from the organizations into their studies. Doing such actions can further Oakland's MPA program to offer an outstanding degree program that delivers the aspiration to rise.

Considering how many respondents were uncertain, the MPA program at Oakland University must continue to equip students with the academic qualifications to succeed in the workforce so as to further employer understanding of what this program from OU has to offer. The MPA program at Oakland University should strive to market their mission AND success rates to give employers a better understanding of how OU graduates in particular are uniquely suited for success in their organizations. Especially, in the fields of health care and nonprofits where none of the respondents stated there considered an MPA program to be better than all others, there is an opportunity to highlight the strengths of this department. In all five employer groups, there is an opportunity to further differentiate the MPA at OU program from other MPA programs both locally and nationally.

Appendix

Survey Instrument

OAKLAND
UNIVERSITY.

MPA Program Employer Survey 2015

Hello:

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at Oakland University advances excellence in public and non-profit management through strengthening the leadership capacity, analytical skills, ethics, accountability, diversity, and responsiveness of current and aspiring public and non-governmental executives. We offer a program designed to deliver outstanding service to our students, the university community, and the public at large. We are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).

We periodically survey employers in order to ensure that our curriculum stays abreast of local developments. We need your help. Please take about 5-7 minutes to help us understand the set of knowledge, skills, and abilities most important to managers in your public or nonprofit organization. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be association with your responses in any reports of the data.

1. Name of organization/ agency: _____

2. Person completing this survey: Name _____

Title _____

Questions? Please contact us at 248.370.3660. When complete, the results will be posted on our website. Visit us at www.oakland.edu/mpa.

Note: OU offers the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree, which in other universities is known as the Master of Public Policy (MPP) or Master of Public Affairs (also MPA) degree. We use the term "MPA" below as shorthand for any of these equivalencies.

3.   Which of the following best describes your organization?

☐ City government

☐ Township, village, or other local government

☐ Nonprofit agency

☐ Health care organization

☐ Sheriff, police, or other criminal justice agency

☐ Court administration or other legal system agency

4.   How familiar are you generally with an MPA degree? *(Please √ one)*

☐ Not Familiar   ☐ Somewhat Familiar   ☐ Very Familiar

5.   If you are generally "Somewhat Familiar" or "Very Familiar" with an MPA degree, which of the following applies to you? *(Please √ all that apply)*

☐ I have earned an MPA degree.

☐ At least one of my co-workers has earned an MPA degree.

☐ I have hired someone who has earned an MPA degree.

☐ I have supervised an intern working toward an MPA degree.

	☐ Other source of familiarity (please specify):

6.   How familiar are you with the OU MPA program?

☐ Not Familiar   ☐ Somewhat Familiar   ☐ Very Familiar

7.   If you are "Somewhat Familiar" or "Very Familiar" with the OU MPA program, how would you rate the quality of OU MPA graduates compared to graduates of other MPA programs?

☐ Superior   ☐ Below average
☐ Above average   ☐ Poor
☐ Average   ☐ Uncertain

8. What is your perception of the value of the following degrees to your organization?

	Not Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Extremely Valuable	Unsure
Juris doctorate (JD/Law)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Economics/Accounting	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Health/Public Health	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of International Relations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Public Administration (MPA)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Social Work (MSW)	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. What effect, if any, would you say the following degrees would have on a person's starting salary?

	No Effect	1-10% Premium	11-20% Premium	More than 20%	Unsure
Juris doctorate (JD/Law)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Economics/Accounting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Health/Public Health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of International Relations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Public Administration (MPA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Master of Social Work (MSW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. How would you compare the performance of those having earned the MPA to that of other employees performing the same or similar work on each of these dimensions?

	Worse	About the Same	Better	Unsure
Management skills	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding of your organization's political environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technical skills	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership potential	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall performance	☐	☐	☐	☐

11.   How would you rate the general performance of employees with an MPA degree compared to their co-workers?

☐ Superior   ☐ Below average
☐ Above average   ☐ Poor
☐ Average   ☐ Uncertain

12.   Which five of the following skill sets would you say are the most important to the successful management of your agency? *(Please ✓ 5 only)*

Decision making/problem solving	☐
Budget preparation, administration	☐
Supervision of subordinates	☐
Performance measurement, program evaluation	☐
IT-related tasks	☐
Statistical/data analysis	☐
Program development	☐
Media relations, program marketing	☐
Strategic planning	☐
Leadership	☐
Manage stakeholders	☐
Conflict resolution	☐
Grants/external funding	☐
Program implementation, service delivery	☐
Agency/program advocacy, lobbying	☐
Teamwork	☐
Citizen participation & involvement	☐

13.   What other skill sets NOT listed above would you say are important for a successful management of your organization?

Please List:

14. **In general, which THREE of the following attributes would you say are the most important to a hiring decision in your organization?**
(Please ✓ 3 only)

Ethics & personal integrity	☐
Writing skills	☐
Public speaking/presentation skills	☐
Analytical & technical skills	☐
Leadership potential	☐
General mgt/admin ability	☐
Work experience	☐

15. **What other attributes NOT listed above would you say are important to the hiring decision in your organization?**

Please list:

16. **For what job titles in your agency would the MPA degree be the appropriate educational credential?**

Please list:

17. **Would you say that employees with an MPA degree are likely to experience more, about the same, or less upward mobility than their co-workers in your organization?**

☐ More   ☐ About the Same   ☐ Less   ☐ Uncertain

18. **Would you say that employees with an MPA degree are assigned more, about the same, or less responsibility than their co-workers?**

☐ More   ☐ About the Same   ☐ Less   ☐ Uncertain

19. **What would you say are the greatest strengths & weaknesses of MPA graduates compared to other employees?** *Please explain, briefly.*

Strengths:

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└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Weaknesses:                                                       │
│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
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│                                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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20. **Is there an MPA program, either locally or nationally, that you consider better than all others?**

☐ Yes, *please specify:* [   ]

☐ No

☐ Uncertain

Your survey is complete. Thank you!

Please, return your completed survey using the enclosed envelope.