

# Advancing Underrepresented Populations in the Public Sector: Approaches and Practices in the Instructional Pipeline

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## ABSTRACT

Although the numbers of women and minorities have steadily risen in the United States federal workforce, some studies have suggested that these groups are still underrepresented in high-level positions. Notwithstanding, surprisingly, only a few studies have examined the recruitment and achievement gap among disadvantaged groups in programs of public administration/policy/affairs with the aim of investigating their role as a pipeline to representation. This study is a step in that direction. It surveys academic heads of U.S. schools accredited by the *Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration* (NASPAA). The survey focuses on four key areas: academic support, financial support, recruitment strategies, and training and development. Among others, findings show for instance that schools with a lower percentage of students from underrepresented groups use scholarships, tuition waivers, and teaching assistantships to recruit students from these populations; in comparison, schools with higher percentages of students from underrepresented groups are able to attract faculty from minority groups at twice the rate of schools with lower percentages of students from underrepresented groups.

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*Keywords:* public administration schools, recruitment, advancement of underrepresented groups, diversity in public sector

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In the United States, the government is the single largest employer, with over 18.5 million civilian employees at the federal, state, and local levels. Being the largest employer has its challenges—the most prominent being hiring, retaining,

and advancing its employees as well as being sensitive to representation roles. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, followed by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 and important legislation such as Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity, government agencies are increasingly under pressure to institute fair recruitment techniques. The expectations and concerns in this context are the extent to which the present workforce is representative of U.S. demographics. A recent report by the Pew Research Center (Passel & Cohn, 2008) predicted that by 2050, one in three Americans (29%) will be Hispanic—a more than 100% increase from the numbers of Hispanics recorded in 2005 (14%). Although the black population is expected to be constant (13%), the Asian population will rise to 9% by 2050, which is more than double the number in 2005 (4%).

Programs of public administration and public affairs in the United States shoulder the responsibility to train future public employees and managers. Nevertheless, currently no data or studies provide information on the percentages of public administration graduates (by minority status) working or planning to work in the public/nonprofit sector, nor is any data available on how many public affairs students continue in public service. This study assumes that programs in public affairs serve as a training ground for students who aspire to work in the public or the nonprofit sector (although it does not discount the possibility that several will go on to work in the private sector). Regardless of the sector students choose to work in, questions of recruitment and training of underrepresented populations remain important both at the representative level (“we support the idea that underrepresented groups should be represented in the public service”) and at the training level (“we as training pipeline should provide the tools for public service representation among these groups so that they can advance in the public service and represent their groups”). Thus this study addresses the following question: What do schools of public administration, public affairs, public policy, public service, and public management do to prepare their students from among underrepresented populations to acquire the skills to advance in public service?<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this study is threefold: (a) to present and analyze the current state of affairs, including opportunity windows allowing for the entry and advancement of skilled underserved minorities in the higher ranks of public service; (b) to administer a survey among accredited NASPAA schools to identify practices that facilitate the recruitment, training, and advancement of the underrepresented populations in public service; and (c) to highlight the findings obtained and provide recommendations to enhance the potential placement of students from underrepresented populations in the public service.

This study assumes that given the decades of laws and policies instituted in the United States to espouse equality, and the NASPAA standards that call for attention to diversity among its core elements for accreditation, various programs of public affairs should be expected to advance recruiting, training, and advancing underrepresented populations. Surprisingly, no study focusing on what schools

do in this regard has been undertaken since Lee and Cayer (1987) published their research in *Public Administration Review* more than two decades ago. This research takes Lee and Cayer's study a step further (a) by examining training and competency development, which were not addressed in the 1987 study; and (b) by examining recruitment strategies for underrepresented minorities, which is the focus of Lee and Cayer's paper, and assessing two decades later whether any significant changes have occurred given the developments and expansion of the field. With the view that a reassessment of the field in this regard is warranted, this study is a step in that direction.

## **BACKGROUND LITERATURE**

In this section, we present a comprehensive review of the literature that examines the state of affairs in the federal workforce for underrepresented minorities and the aging population in the U.S. federal workforce. We include this review to serve as a window into the problems of recruiting, training, and graduating students from underrepresented populations.

### **Current State of Affairs in the Federal Workforce**

What is the rationale for seeking to include proportional or near proportional percentages of representation of a nation's population in the public service? The theory of representative bureaucracy distinguishes between active and passive forms of representation (Llorens, Wenger, & Kellough, 2008; Selden, 1997; Wilkins, 2007). According to Wilkins (2007), "Passive representation is concerned with the bureaucracy's having the same demographic origins (sex, race, income, class, religion) as the population it serves," while active representation "is concerned with how representation influences policymaking and implementation" (p. 79). Having a workforce that mirrors the general population is seen as a prerequisite for active representation in which the attitudes, values, and policies reflect the choices and interests of those from underrepresented groups (Kelly & Newman, 2001; Meier & Stewart, 1992; Selden & Selden, 2001; Sowa & Selden, 2003; Wilkins, 2007).

In fact, a statistical snapshot of the situation today shows that in the United States, 34% of the population is nonwhite, and minorities constitute 14.6% of those at senior pay levels.<sup>2</sup> Although the numbers of women and minorities have been rising in the U.S. federal workforce over the years, this state of affairs causes concern among scholars and policy makers over achieving a representative bureaucracy (Cornwell & Kellough, 1994; Guy, 1993; Guy & Newman, 2004; Hsieh & Winslow, 2006; Kellough, 1990; Kim, 1993; Kim & Lewis, 1994; Lee & Cayer, 1987; Naff, 2001; Riccucci, 2009; Selden & Selden, 2001). Several other studies have explored the reasons for lower representation of women and minorities in public agencies (Bowling, Kelleher, Jones, & Wright, 2006; Cayer & Sigelman, 1980; Miller, Kerr, & Reid, 1999; Reid, Kerr, & Miller, 2003; Newman, 1994;

Riccucci & Saidel, 1997; Selden & Selden, 2001). Still, very few of these studies examine the educational gap within the pipeline among the disadvantaged groups, a potential cause for the lack of representation witnessed at top-level positions in the federal workforce (Breihan, 2007). The problem of the gender and race gap is partly attributed to the educational gap experienced by these disadvantaged groups (Dobbins & Walker, 2000; Hsieh & Winslow, 2006). In the context of our study, this educational gap also concerns the ability to obtain and provide tools that would allow, through instruction and learning, people from underrepresented groups to become (senior) public servants representing their social or ethnic group.

### **Opportunity Window: The Aging Population in the U.S. Federal Workforce**

At this time, there is a real and major opportunity window to address the problem identified earlier. Any changes in awareness and perspective in U.S. public affairs schools as regards underserved populations can help to advance this group in the American federal system. What is the opportunity window? A major opening of positions in public service: According to the Partnership for Public Service,<sup>3</sup> over the next several years the demand for knowledge-based employees will be on the rise in the U.S. federal government. This development is due to several factors. First, in the coming years approximately three fifths of the 1.6 million federal white-collar employees will be eligible for retirement, and an even larger proportion of employees at the executive level will retire in less than a decade. With a record number of employees eligible for retirement, the U.S. government faces an enormous challenge of attracting and hiring new talent into the federal workforce (Sistare, Shiplett, & Buss, 2008).

Second, with the economic downturn of the first decade of the new millennium, the possibility for baby boomers to stay in service longer comes as a welcome respite for the federal government, which otherwise would have had to replace a large number of employees who have a wealth of experience, knowledge, and technical know-how. Although the impact of the slowing U.S. economy on federal retirement rates is beyond the purview of this research, this study considers this opportunity window. The gap that will soon be left by an aging population in the U.S. government sector implies the need for a new cadre in the federal public service.

With these developments in mind, democratic representation can be addressed if adequate attention is given to the pipeline. In line with our view of the opportunity window where policies and the politics of representation can meet (Kingdon, 1973), Lewis and Frank (2002), for instance, suggest that the gap can be filled by a growing population of women and minorities in the workforce. They further assert that these populations have even been shown to view government jobs in a more positive fashion as compared with Caucasians and men.

Given the assumption that the schools of public affairs can and should serve as a pipeline for the training of potential public servants, this study focuses on the public affairs programs pipeline that is by definition preparing to meet the future personnel demands of the U.S. government. The role of public affairs schools is to supply the human capital, including balancing the talent pool to include individuals from diverse backgrounds in the government: From a human resources perspective, what these schools do, or can do, on issues of training, recruitment, and retention is paramount. Public affairs graduates often start at a GS level 9 or 11 in the federal government. Having a public affairs degree consequently is desirable for jobs in the public sector, and it can help jump-start one's career. This is a particularly important assumption when the issue focused on in this study is the advancement of underserved populations in the public service and when we tie this view to studies such as Hsieh and Winslow (2006) and Lewis and Frank (2002), described earlier.

Third, another window of opportunity is the high visibility and priority given to public service. In December 2010, President Obama signed an Executive Order that instituted the "Pathways Programs"<sup>4</sup> in association with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) for "Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates." The order establishes government-wide Internships and Recent Graduates programs, and it strengthens the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program. The executive order recognizes the need for federal recruiting of graduates from NASPAA-accredited public administration and related programs.

What should be of concern for schools of public affairs? Interestingly, statistics show that in 2003, graduates holding an MBA degree outnumber MPA degree holders by four to one (Lewis & Soo Oh, 2008) and that graduates from the latter often do not join the public service (Chetkovich, 2003; Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, & Anker, 2008). Studies by Chetkovich (2003), for instance, provided evidence on career choices made by students showing diminishing interest in public service careers from the time they entered the master's programs to the time they were ready to graduate.<sup>5</sup> In this context the issue of education, retention, and graduation of minority students is a highly contended topic in American higher education (Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2000; Nettles & Perna, 1997). It appears that minority representation has not received as much focus in the development of human capital that will join the U.S. public service (i.e., the fields of public policy, public management, public affairs and administration), as for instance, in the fields of science and technology. Given the minority students' relatively positive attitudes toward public service as compared to those of white Caucasian males, making the point of tapping this population in the public affairs programs can be a feasible alternative to retention. Nevertheless, to date, though schools of public affairs have come a long way with respect to enrolling and graduating minority students from public affairs programs (Jordan, Rice, & Mathews, 1994;

Lee & Cayer, 1987), minority presence in schools totals only about 24.4%.<sup>6</sup> Considerable work remains to be done, and this study proposes to highlight the state of affairs today as a step toward facilitating the efforts of schools of public affairs to take advantage of the recent opportunity windows.

To summarize, the opportunity window provided by the renewed call for public service in the United States as well as the emerging socio-demographic changes give schools the chance to seize this momentum and address the challenge of (a) recruiting and preparing young minds to work in the public sector, and (b) bridging the gap between the growing underserved populations and their representation in the government workforce. On both matters, a major part of the onus lies on the schools offering public administration and related degree programs. This study seeks to find out what is being done and how gaps can be identified and bridged to address the challenges and unique opportunities of the forthcoming decade.

### **Recruiting, Training, and Graduating Students From Underrepresented Populations**

By definition, public service education is meant to play an important pipeline role in developing the future of public service. This role is augmented by the fact that U.S. government agencies continue to face challenges in drawing individuals with the highest skills and abilities into public service (Jordan et al., 1994; Lewis & Frank, 2002; Soni, 2000). Studies by Breihan (2007) among others assert that low enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of students from underserved populations in schools of public administration may also be contributing to the growing gap witnessed at top-level positions in the U.S. federal workforce. In her article, Breihan summarizes the need for recruiting and retaining a diverse group:

Graduate programs of public administration and of nonprofit management have a real responsibility to educate people who are representative of our entire nation and the people served by government and nonprofits. We know that the educational experiences we have to offer can benefit not just our students' careers but all those they serve. (p. 87)

This is the very view that we hold in undertaking this study. Indeed, several attempts have been made in the past to address the call by the U.S. government for public service at various times: A few Ivy League schools like Yale, Harvard, and Columbia set aside grants for bright minority students and offered short-term courses to train them for entering public service (Cikins, 1966). These efforts have put public service on the map, and minority public servants are highly sought after. However, the limited number of minority graduates did not significantly increase the relative presence of minorities in the government.

Notwithstanding, although studies have examined the issues of recruitment and graduation in public administration programs from a normative standpoint, they have done so without empirical data (Briehan, 2007; Jordan et al., 1994; Rivera & Ward, 2008). The only study to date that empirically examined the recruitment and graduation rates of minorities from public administration programs in the United States was conducted by Lee and Cayer (1987). The authors examined existing data from NASPAA and Digest for Education Statistics. They also conducted a survey of 210 NASPAA member institutions and affiliates in 1986. To address the issue of recruitment and retention, they looked into the following aspects: (a) interpersonal activities such as personal letters, campus visits, advertisements in publications; (b) financial aid as key factors in attracting and recruiting students from minority groups; and (c) a school's ability to provide mentoring services and financial aid, which the study's authors reported as crucial in retaining minority students.

Lee and Cayer (1987) concluded that although the number of minorities recruited in public administration programs had increased at that time, the students were not representative of U.S. demographics overall. The authors called for greater recruitment efforts on the part of institutions to enroll and retain minority students. It has now been more than two decades since Lee and Cayer conducted their study; the current number for NASPAA member institutions has grown from 210 in 1986 to about 264 in 2007, and the field has matured considerably.<sup>7</sup> Although Lee and Cayer as well as the NASPAA standards deem diversity and minority recruitment important, no follow-up study has been conducted on how far the discipline has progressed as regards attention to minority groups.

At about the same time as Lee and Cayer published their study, Cleary (1990) looked into what constituted the "inner core" of NASPAA-accredited master's programs, an aspect not addressed by the former authors in their study on the recruitment and retention of minorities. Cleary identified the core curriculum in public affairs of the late 1980s and focused on these aspects: human resources; finance and budget; information technology; public policy; political, economic, and social institutions; and organizational behavior and management. Diversity was not addressed in his study.

We undertook the present study with the aspects addressed in the two studies just described in mind, as well as with the reassertion by NASPAA of the importance of diversity as an important component of graduate training and accreditation (NASPAA Standards, 2009;<sup>8</sup> Pitts & Wise, 2004; Rice, 2004; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). Although such a study is long overdue after two decades, we trust that the findings of this paper will shed light on what the schools stand for as regards diversity, and suggest what they should do to advance and facilitate democratic representation in the public service.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study builds on the needs, opportunity windows, and assumptions identified in the first part of this article. It intends to provide operational answers in order to be ready to meet the challenges and opportunity windows of this second decade of the 21st century and its projected needs. The study proposes to take a bottom-up approach in examining (a) curricula and practices used in graduate programs of public affairs to grant students from underrepresented groups the skills required in public service; and (b) what can be done to increase enrollment, graduation rates, and future placement of members belonging to underrepresented groups.

To meet our objectives, we designed and administered a survey among all NASPAA-accredited schools of public affairs in the United States. The survey respondents were deans/chairs/directors of various public policy, public administration, and public affairs, and public management programs. We focused on these people and programs because (a) we asserted that a major part of the decision making and responsibility of skills and means for the advancement of underrepresented students in the federal workforce lies with the schools offering public administration and related degrees; and (b) we assumed that the chairs would have this information readily available.

### The Survey

We chose the survey as a core methodological approach because it allowed us to address and receive answers across a large range of schools that are widely dispersed throughout the United States: Basically, we aimed at including all heads of NASPAA programs of public affairs listed in the searchable database on the NASPAA website in the United States in 2008–2009. The survey was conducted in summer 2009 and was administered in four waves (July–September 2009). Out of 242 e-mail requests, 23 e-mails turned out to be unusable or had incorrect e-mail addresses; as a result, a total of 219 requests were sent out. Standard survey protocols were followed; nonresponders received three reminders, each a week apart. We adhered to strict ethical scrutiny: All schools and responding heads remained anonymous, even at the disadvantage of not being able to determine their geographical location.<sup>9</sup> The survey achieved a 35% response rate.

The survey used a Likert Scale questionnaire format, except for items requiring a straight yes/no response. In addition, we sought qualitative feedback through open-ended questions, thus allowing us to explain or clarify previously asked closed-ended questions. Because the survey was the only method employed in this study, we sought to ascertain validity and reliability of responses through an assessment of internal reliability: We used a split-half design for the survey questionnaire, paraphrasing operational questions pertaining to the same “issue” to mirror one another in the two halves of the questionnaire.

To correlate findings in the final analysis with factual information, the survey questionnaire sought demographic information about programs, respondents, faculty members, and student representation. The anonymity of the respondents

affected our ability to assess the parameter of geographical influence on the practices reported in the questionnaire. Both the closed- and open-ended questions pertained to one of the four academic and administrative aspects that we identified in the general literature as dealing with public affairs programs (Briehan, 2007; Pitts & Wise, 2004; Rice, 2004; Rivera & Ward, 2008; Rubaii-Barrett, 2006; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000) and also as respectively and partially investigated by Lee and Cayer (1987).

These four key aspects are (a) academic support and mentoring, (b) financial support, (c) student recruitment strategy, and (d) student training and competency development (i.e., curricular components addressing the needs and skills toolbox expected of or by students from minority groups). Each one of these core characteristics formed a conceptual cluster of operational questions reflecting on practices explicating the status of each “aspect” as regards efforts to recruit, retain, and advance students from underserved groups.

We further classified and analyzed the data received, for each of the four aspects, respectively, into two main categories by type of school based on the schools’ demographics: (a) programs with a “low” percentage of underrepresented minorities (LURM) at less than 34%; and, (b) programs with a “high” percentage of underrepresented minorities (HURM) at above 34%.

*Criteria.* The decision to classify programs into these two groups and to use 34% as the criterion was made based on U.S. demographics, which currently stand at 34% nonwhite. As well, we based this criterion on the theory of representative bureaucracy, which argues that creating a workforce that will mimic the demographics of the country is a prerequisite to creating an active form of representation (Kelly & Newman, 2001; Meier & Stewart, 1992; Selden & Selden, 2001; Sowa & Selden, 2003; Wilkins, 2007).

*Data analysis.* To compare and bring out the differences in support, recruitment, and training practices instituted by the schools included in either of these two groups, we performed t-tests (difference of means tests). In the following section, we discuss the results of the survey focusing on demographic data with special attention on the four key aspects of the programs: academic support, financial support, recruitment strategies, and student training.

## **FINDINGS**

Most of the respondents were affiliated with a public university (85.5%) and, as expected, held an administrative position (88.2%). Most of the academic units offered public administration as a graduate program (86.8%), followed by public policy (19.7%), public affairs (18.4%), public management (17.7%), and public service (9.2%).<sup>10</sup> Underrepresented minority students in the sample were only 24.4%, which is below the national minority average (34% minorities). As well, this figure is below the graduation numbers reported by NASPAA in 2008 (47%).<sup>11</sup>

Table 1.  
*Key Aspects Facilitating Advancement of Underrepresented Populations in Public Service*

Variables	Overall Response (N = 76)		Low Percentage of Minority Students (≤ 34%); N = 48		High Percentage of Minority Students (> 34%); N = 28	
	N	% Responding "Yes"	N	% Responding "Yes"	N	% Responding "Yes"
<b>Academic Support</b>						
Accepts promising students with some weak academic skills	47	61.8	29	60.4	18	64.3
Offers support courses to assist students with academic weaknesses	26	34.2	17	35.4	9	32.1
Offers preparatory courses to assist students with academic weaknesses	26	34.2	18	37.5	8	28.6
<b>Financial Support</b>						
<i>My Academic Unit offers the following in order to recruit students from underrepresented populations:</i>						
Scholarships*	44	57.9	32	66.7	12	42.9
Paid internships	26	34.2	19	39.6	7	25.0
Teaching assistantships *	26	34.2	20	41.7	6	21.4
Research assistantships	43	56.6	30	62.5	13	46.4
Tuition waivers*	37	48.7	28	58.3	9	32.1
Arrange for internship positions for our students	55	72.4	36	75.0	19	67.9
Arrangements with external organizations to get students involved in public service	44	57.9	30	62.5	14	50.0
Granting of paid internships is based primarily on need	5	6.6	4	8.3	1	3.6

Table 1.

Key Aspects Facilitating Advancement of Underrepresented Populations in Public Service (continued)

Variables	Overall Response (N = 76)	Low Percentage of Minority Students (≤ 34%); N = 48	High Percentage of Minority Students (> 34%); N = 28
<b>Recruitment Strategy</b>			
<i>My Academic Unit uses the following techniques to recruit students from underrepresented populations:</i>			
Mail-outs*	23	18	5
Visits to colleges	32	23	9
Advertisements	35	23	12
Have faculty who have the expertise to adequately supervise students' dissertations on issues of underrepresented populations	54	34	20
<b>Student Training</b>			
<i>Please indicate those topics that are substantially dealt with at graduate level in your Academic Unit:</i>			
Diversity issues in general	64	39	25
Issues related to African Americans	37	22	15
Issues related to Hispanics	29	16	13
Issues related to Asians	15	8	7
Issues related to women	50	33	17
Issues related to immigrants	32	17	15
Issues related to poverty	51	33	18
Issues related to human rights	46	26	20
Issues related to leadership	72	44	28
Issues related to community service	72	45	27

Notes. Difference of means tests (t-tests) are presented for programs with low and high numbers of students from underrepresented groups.

\* p < .05

+ p < .1

Out of the 76 responding institutions, (a) N = 48 (63%) schools reported having less than 34% of their student body from underrepresented populations, classified as LURM; and (b) only N = 28 (37%) reported having more than 34% of their student body from underrepresented populations, classified as HURM. Next we present the findings obtained from LURM and HURM institutions respectively for each of the four academic or administrative aspects identified: academic support, financial support, recruitment strategies, and student training. The overall results are included in Table 1.

### **Academic Support**

Academic support in the form of preparatory courses (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Swail et al., 2003), providing assistance with basic skills (Tinto, 1987), and mentoring (Lee & Cayer, 1987; Wallace, Abel, & Ropers-Huilman, 2000) are usually positively related to persistence rates of underrepresented minorities. Academic support is measured by mechanisms used by programs that aid in helping students with weak academic skills from underrepresented populations. The results of this study (see Table 1) suggest that programs with a high percentage of underrepresented minorities are more likely to accept students with weak academic skills; but, interestingly, these programs are less likely to offer support and preparatory courses. The results are reversed in programs that have a lower percentage of underrepresented minority students. However, we found that the relationship between academic support and percentage of underrepresented minority students was not statistically significant.

*Practices.* Regardless of the forms of academic support offered in various graduate programs, we also asked respondents to identify the practices that are seen as effective in helping underrepresented populations to graduate. We were able to generate eight themes from the 49 responses to the open-ended question regarding these practices; the following themes are prominent: Mentoring by Faculty (57%) was viewed as particularly effective and accounted for the largest frequency. For example, one respondent wrote: "Letting them [students] know you are available and are willing to be supportive, while at the same time upholding standards and requiring accountability." Addressing Basic Skills (27%) followed mentoring; another academic head responded, "Any shortcomings in basic skills must be addressed, but this is no longer an issue unique to underrepresented populations." Internships (22%) closely follow.

*Resources.* To further spotlight the issue of support, we also asked respondents to identify the resources that in their view should be deployed to enhance graduation rates of underrepresented students. Seven themes were generated from the 25 responses to the open-ended question in this regard. Offering Financial Assistance (28%) accounted for the largest frequency, followed by Mentoring (24%) and Basic Skills (20%). Responses to the question, "What resources should be

provided to enhance graduation rates of underrepresented students?" included "More funding to allow for full-time study," "Tuition waivers," and "Childcare." These findings may indicate a gap between financial assistance that is actually being offered by some schools of public affairs and what respondents believe should be provided to support them in attaining graduation.

### **Financial Support**

The effect of financial aid on retention has received increasing attention with the development of theories that assign an important role to finances in determining students' college enrollment decisions (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992). Interestingly, we note a reverse phenomenon (see Table 1): LURM programs are significantly more likely than HURM programs are to offer scholarships (66.7% vs. 42.9%) and tuition waivers (58.3% vs. 32.1%). These results are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

As shown in Table 1, the findings obtained in this survey indicate that LURM programs are more likely than HURM programs to spend resources and use various approaches to target and recruit students from underrepresented populations. Such approaches include mail-outs, advertisements, and visits to campuses. LURM programs appear to be twice as likely as HURM programs to use mail-outs to colleges (37.5% vs. 17.9%). Note that these findings have a 90% level of significance. Similarly, 48% of LURM programs reported making actual visits to colleges to recruit members of these groups, as opposed to only 32% of HURM programs. A similar pattern emerged for using advertisements as a recruitment tool (48% of LURM programs vs. 43% of HURM programs). It is interesting to note that similar recruitment techniques were reported by Lee and Cayer during the late 1980s. It is rather surprising that technology developments and other creative communication means do not seem to have affected recruitment methods since.

Fifteen themes emerged from the responses to the open-ended questions about what the respondents felt were the most effective practices in recruiting underrepresented students. Accounting for the highest frequencies are Word of Mouth (26%) and Targeting Undergraduate Students/Programs (23%). Both of these factors have been cited as important for recruiting and retaining students from underrepresented populations (Olson, 1988; Rogers & Molina, 2006). Composition of the Program (13%) accounted for the third-highest frequency. A respondent stated: "Turn the program from a classroom-only program into a mixed online/classroom program."

LURM schools, according to our findings, are more likely to agree that they recruit faculty from minority groups specializing in issues of underrepresented populations (Table 2). LURM programs are significantly less likely to hire faculty from underrepresented groups. Hiring faculty members from minority populations

has been shown in several other studies to be an important factor in recruiting students from disadvantaged groups (Holmes et al., 2000; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985; Rask & Bailey, 2002; Swail et al., 2003). HURM programs appear to be twice as likely to hire minority faculty as compared with programs having lower percentages of minority students (13% vs. 30%). These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level of significance and in line with previous literature (Rask & Bailey, 2002; Swail et al., 2003). Both findings, in conjunction, have the potential to draw forth the recommendation that schools with a high representation of faculty members from underrepresented groups are more likely to attract students from similar backgrounds. Hiring minority faculty may be a means of attracting students from minority groups.

Table 2.  
*Mean Differences in Recruitment Strategies Employed by Various Public Affairs Programs, by Percentage of Minority Students*

Variables <sup>a,b</sup>	Overall Mean Response (N = 76)	Low Percentage of Minority Students ( $\leq 34\%$ )	High Percentage of Minority Students ( $> 34\%$ )
	N = 76	Mean N = 48	Mean N = 28
My Academic Unit makes an effort to recruit students from underrepresented populations.	2.07	1.94	2.29
My Academic Unit makes an effort to recruit faculty specializing in issues of underrepresented populations (last 2 years).	2.54	2.58	2.46
My Academic Unit has been recruiting faculty from underrepresented populations (last 2 years).	2.11	2.19	1.96
In my Academic Unit, current practices have been effective in recruiting students from underrepresented populations (last 2 years).	2.26	2.52**	1.82
Average percentage of minority faculty hired in the last two years	19.88	13.61**	30.63

- a. Possible responses: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree  
 b. t-test for difference across programs with low and high percentage of minority students is significant at \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Student Training and Competency Development

When compared with LURM programs, HURM programs offer substantially more courses related to diversity, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, immigrants,

human rights, community service, and leadership as part of their graduate curriculum. Nevertheless, women and poverty issues are addressed similarly by the two categories of schools (Table 3). The results, though not statistically significant, indicate unanimous agreement by both groups (LURM and HURM) that Introduction to Welfare Studies and Introduction to Legal Studies are important courses that programs must offer to prepare future graduates; notwithstanding, both groups rated the Managing Diversity course very low: mean scores of .89 and .81 on a scale of 1 through 5, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. These results are interesting given that several studies have stressed the importance of including diversity courses as an integral part of the curriculum (Pitts & Wise, 2004; Rice, 2004; Rubaii-Barrett, 2006; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). However, as noted by Rubaii-Barrett (2006), the challenge might be that programs do not have faculty members who are sufficiently trained to teach these courses. The results further suggest that though LURM programs agree on the importance of offering courses related to diversity, they are less likely to offer these courses as a substantial part of their curriculum as compared with HURM programs.

Table 3.  
*Topics Useful in Preparing Future Practitioners for Public Service*

<b>Variables<sup>a,b</sup></b>	<b>Overall Response (N = 76)</b>	<b>Low Percentage of Minority Students (≤ 34%)</b>	<b>High Percentage of Minority Students (&gt; 34%)</b>
		Mean N = 48	Mean N = 28
Social psychology of engaging minorities	2.51	2.44	2.46
Managing diversity	1.64	0.89	0.81
Organizational behavior	1.37	1.42	1.29
Cultural studies	2.33	2.42	2.18
Issues of work/life balance	2.11	2.13	2.07
Introduction to public policy	1.54	1.56	1.5
Introduction to public administration	1.42	1.52	1.25
Introduction to legal studies	2.43	2.42	2.46
Introduction to welfare studies	2.71	2.71	2.71
Micro- and macro-economics	1.92	1.92	1.93
NGOs and community work	1.75	1.77	1.71
Public management	1.36	1.40	1.29

a. Possible responses: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree

b. t-test for difference across programs with low and high percentage of minority students

Based on the responses to the related open-ended questions asking respondents to identify other topics useful to prepare future practitioners for public service, we identified 12 key themes. The most prevalent responses, resulting in the highest percentages, were Ethics (21%), Financial Management (21%), and Research Methods (21%). Other topics, quite interdisciplinary in nature but low in how frequently they are offered, reflect the need for a broad education in preparing future public service workers (Geva-May, 2005, 2007; Geva-May & Maslove, 2007; Geva-May, Nasi, Turrini, & Scott, 2008). Analytic Methods, Community Development, Demography, Economic Development, Globalization, Public Communications, Social/Environmental Justice, Technology, and Workforce Diversity each accounted for only 7% of the responses.

Overall, the data in Tables 1 through 3 suggest that more than half of the programs accept promising students with some weak academic skills, provide scholarships and research assistantships to facilitate the recruitment of students from underrepresented populations, have faculty with adequate expertise to supervise students' dissertations on issues of underrepresented populations, and make arrangements for internships and work with external organizations to get students involved in public service. Close to 85% of programs dealt with issues of diversity in their curriculum while less than one fifth addressed Asian diversity. Almost all the programs (95%) agreed that they dealt with topics related to leadership and community service in their graduate curriculum. Less than half the programs indicated that they addressed issues related to African Americans, immigrants, and Hispanics in their curriculum. On average, 20% of the programs indicated that they had hired minority faculty members in the last two years (2007 to 2009). Although the aggregate data are encouraging for recruitment and training of students, the recruitment rates of minority faculty members remain low.

## CONCLUSIONS

The current study investigated the role of recruitment, enrollment and retention, and training and development of students from underrepresented populations in public affairs and related programs in the United States. Although these are important issues in the American higher education system, minority representation has not received as much focus in the fields of public affairs as, for instance, in the fields of science and technology in the development of human capital. Our findings indicate that a majority (63%) of public affairs and related programs have less than 34% of their student body from underrepresented populations, which we classified as LURM (low percentage of underrepresented minorities).

Additional findings suggest that programs with fewer students from underrepresented groups also employ fewer faculty members from these groups. On average, only one fifth of the programs indicated that they had hired minority faculty members in the last two years (2007 to 2009). Based on these findings, and supported by the literature in this field (Holmes et al., 2000; Pruitt & Isaac, 1989; Swail et al., 2003), we conclude that attracting and retaining students and

faculty from underrepresented groups are interrelated; thus, both objectives should be an institutional priority. Public affairs and related programs should allocate budgets that would enable departments to recruit candidates from underrepresented groups. Increasing individuals from these groups requires commitment from the top down. Additionally, mentoring faculty of color along with providing institutional support (Stanley, 2006) that promotes autonomy (Tack & Patitu, 1992) and intellectual challenge (Turner, 2002) should remain a top priority for public affairs programs with fewer numbers of faculty members from underrepresented groups.

NASPAA mandates that programs prepare their students “to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry” (NASPAA Standards, 2009, Standard 5.1).<sup>12</sup> It is thus important for public affairs/administration programs in the United States to meet appropriate standards. Quite surprisingly, and despite the sample coming from NASPAA-accredited programs, less than half indicated that they addressed issues related to African Americans, immigrants, and Hispanics in their curriculum. It is thus important for schools of public affairs and the like to incorporate NASPAA standards of diversity in their curricula.

Our findings further suggest that programs of public affairs throughout the United States struggle to attract and recruit students from underrepresented groups. Personalized letters and visits to colleges continue to remain the predominant method of recruitment; quite astoundingly, not much has changed in recruitment methods since Lee and Cayer’s (1987) study. Schools of public affairs and the like must use e-media (social networking sites, e-mails, etc.) as a form of recruitment. Public affairs schools should also actively recruit students by targeting minority institutions and high schools with higher percentages of students from underrepresented groups. These students can form the pipeline for the master’s programs. However, the lower numbers of underrepresented minorities could be a measure of fewer students available in the recruitment pool. Future studies should investigate demographic breakdowns by region and address the gap between the recruitment and existent pool of student population in the region. This study did not seek information on the graduation rates and placement of minority students, nor did it investigate the impact of NASPAA standards on recruitment of minority students and faculty members. Although these are ripe topics for future research, our study helped identify practices that facilitate the recruitment, training, and advancement of underrepresented populations in public affairs.

Another point that needs to be acknowledged is that only 35% of the NASPAA-accredited schools responded to the survey—despite following standard survey procedures and sending three rounds of reminders past the initial request. Although this may be regarded as one of the study’s limitations, it is reported that the average response rate at the organizational level is 37% (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Studies also point to the low response rates as the biggest challenge of Internet-based surveys (Sheehan & Grubbs-Hoy, 1999; Yun & Trumbo, 2000).

Finally, NASPAA, the accreditation body for graduate public affairs and related programs in the United States, indirectly acts as a pipeline for underserved minorities by mandating both student and faculty diversity as an accreditation requirement for programs nationwide. The primary focus of accreditation is to prepare students to be leaders, managers, and analysts in the professions of public affairs, public administration, and public policy. With the changing demographics of the nation, it is important for schools of public affairs in the United States to identify the academic, financial, curriculum, and training needs to attract, retain, and graduate students from especially underserved populations. To further ensure that minority students graduate, several strategies can be employed: (a) ensuring faculty mentoring of minority students, (b) addressing shortcomings in basic skills, (c) providing internships, and (d) offering financial assistance. Study results revealed that schools of public affairs should consider adopting a major change of perspective and developing more creative approaches in line with their role in advancing underrepresented populations and the responsibilities that come with it.

## NOTES

- 1 Schools of public administration, public affairs, public policy, public service, and public management are hereafter referred to as public affairs programs. Underrepresented groups include students/faculty from African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, immigrants, and women, among others. Public service includes the federal government, nonprofits, and state and local government organizations.
- 2 A report issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: <http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/reports/fsp2006/agencies/governmentwidethegovernment.html>
- 3 For more information on this report, see <http://www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/searchresults.php?keywords=&sort=&recordstart=10&pagesize=10>
- 4 For more details on the Pathways Programs, see <http://www.naspaa.org/PolicyCenter/index.asp>
- 5 The author conducted the study at the John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley.
- 6 The percentage of students belonging to underrepresented minorities reported in this study for the years 2007–2009 is 24.4%, which is below the national averages (34% minorities) and the graduation numbers reported by NASPAA in 2008 (47%).
- 7 The number of NASPAA member institutions was taken from the NASPAA website, which provides the enrollment and degrees awarded data for master's degrees in the year 2007. See <http://www.naspaa.org/principals/almanac/Survey2007/mastersdegrees.asp>
- 8 For further details on the 2009 NASPAA standards report, visit <http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/standard2009/docs/NS2009FinalVote10.16.2009.pdf>

- 9 The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the approval number is 09-0017C.
- 10 The numbers do not add up to 100%, because academic units might offer more than one degree program.
- 11 Of the 268 NASPAA institutional members as of spring 2008, 159 responded to the survey, resulting in 53% belonging to white, non-Hispanic in the master's program. Among doctoral recipients, 47% were white, non-Hispanics. These are degree granted numbers, which are typically lower than enrollment figures.
- 12 For more details on the guidelines for NASPAA accreditation, see <http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/NS/Interpretations.asp>

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# Canonical Texts in Public Policy Studies: A Quantitative Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

As an interdisciplinary study, public policy is situated at the intersection of traditional academic disciplines combined with the needs of policy research in the governmental sphere. Through the application of pragmatic analysis to collective decision making, public policy implementation and evaluation rely upon theoretical concepts and frameworks developed from other disciplines. A major challenge for this discipline whose current state of literature is relatively fragmented is identifying a canon of texts fundamental to the development of its intellectual framework. No such agreed upon canon currently exists. This article offers a quantitative analysis specifying such a canon, termed *the great books and articles of public policy*. The establishment of a canon seeks to provide a common vocabulary for the intellectual development of the field and a common ground to integrate major concepts and theories into a coherent framework. In short, what is the core curriculum of canonical public policy texts?

*Keywords:* great books, citation analysis, survey research, core curriculum

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Public policy is an evolving field characterized by academic and pragmatic initiatives to enrich and promote the expansion of policy-oriented research, including the development of new methodologies that meet the ongoing needs of policy makers. Although the field has a large repertoire of published texts, the current state of the public policy literature is not well defined. Yet every academic field has canonical texts that serve as “intellectual landmarks” (Shafritz, Layne, & Borick, 2005, p. vii). The advancement of public policy depends on examining the ideas and works found in the texts that have shaped the field’s understanding and development. The goal of this study is to contribute to the greater public policy community by developing a canon of classic texts through a quantitative analysis (here we use the term *public policy* to encompass related fields and subfields including, but not limited to, public affairs, public administration, public management, policy analysis, and policy science, while still being cognizant that each of these fields has its distinct focuses).