



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute for Public and Nonprofit Studies
Master of Public Administration (MPA)

I. MISSION STATEMENT

“The Master of Public Administration Program prepares students for careers in public service and nonprofit organizations by providing outstanding academic and practical instruction in public administration. Preparing a corps of technically proficient, ethical and service-oriented public administrators will improve the quality of life and governance for all the region’s citizens and this is our primary mission.”

Our program aspires to meet the standards set out by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). We support the broader institutional mission of Georgia Southern University by preparing our diverse graduate student population for careers in leadership and service in the region and worldwide.

II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Our program learning outcomes have been aligned with the NASPAA required competencies and designed to evaluate our effectiveness in “preparing a corps of technically proficient, ethical, and service-oriented public administrators.” All students in the Masters of Public Administration program are included in the assessment. Program learning outcomes are as follows:

Learning Outcome 1: Using the major theories underlying the field of public administration students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.

Learning Outcome 2: Students can articulate and apply a public service perspective in their demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.

Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to participate in the public policy process through analysis and application of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of a public policy or program.

Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to describe the public policy process and the administrator’s role in that process.

Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions using moral reasoning skills.

Learning Outcome 6: Students will participate in and contribute to the policy process through preparation and analysis of a public budget in order to lead and manage in public governance.

Learning Outcome 7: Students can manage the major components of a personnel system within an organizational setting, understand the nuances of effectively motivating and managing personnel, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

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Program learning outcomes are mapped to NASPAA required competencies as noted in Table 1.

TABLE 1:

NASPAA Required Competency	Program Learning Outcomes
To lead and manage in public governance	5, 6, 7
To participate in and contribute to the public policy process	3, 4
To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	1, 3, 5
To articulate and apply a public service perspective	2, 5
To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry	7

Program learning outcomes are supported by lower level program learning goals that are more easily measured as indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 2:

Program Learning Outcome	Program-Level Learning Goals
Learning Outcome 1: Using the major theories underlying the field of public administration students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.	LG 1: Students can distinguish between the major theories underlying the field of public administration LG 2: Students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems
Learning Outcome 2: Students can articulate and apply a public service perspective in their demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.	LG 3: Students can differentiate between the structures, components, goals, and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors and the private sector LG 4: Students can articulate a public service perspective in their approach to addressing organizational problems
Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to participate in the public policy process through analysis and application of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of a public policy or program.	LG 5: Students demonstrate basic competence in quantitative and qualitative research methods LG 6: Students are able to accurately interpret the results produced by analytical and statistical tools and methods LG 7: Students are able to evaluate public policy or program effectiveness using quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence
Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to describe the public policy process and the administrator's role in that process.	LG 8: Students are able to describe the public policy process LG 9: Students are able to describe the administrator's role in the public policy process
Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions using moral reasoning skills.	LG 10: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration LG 11: Students are able to assess the nuances and ambiguities of ethical situations LG 12: Students are able to create appropriate solutions to ethical problems using moral reasoning skills

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<p>Learning Outcome 6: Students will participate in and contribute to the policy process through preparation and analysis of a public budget in order to lead and manage in public governance.</p>	<p>LG 13: Students can prepare a budget for a small public organization LG 14: Students can analyze a budget for public organizations of all sizes</p>
<p>Learning Outcome 7: Students can manage the major components of a personnel system within an organizational setting, understand the nuances of effectively motivating and managing personnel, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.</p>	<p>LG 15: Students are able to explain the major components of a public personnel system LG 16: Students can discuss the nuances of motivating and managing personnel LG 17: Students are able to discuss the legal and organizational issues related to productive interaction with a diverse workforce and citizenry</p>

III. MEASURES

A. Types of measures and the relationship between measure and outcomes

We use the learning outcome rubric, course assessment matrix, and linkage of measures to learning goals and program learning outcomes (see Tables 3, 4, and 5 below) to assess a number of core courses on an annual basis. The rubric is designed to measure progress toward the seven (7) broad learning outcomes listed in Section II above, which are designed to assess the major tenets of the MPA Program’s core curriculum. Each learning outcome has three (3) potential assessment outcomes associated with it, which are meant to assess students’ understanding of the concepts present; e.g., developing, good, and exemplary. Each assessment outcome has a numerical value associated with it on a scale of 1-3. Students who demonstrate developing knowledge of the listed outcomes would be measured at one (1), while students demonstrating good knowledge would be measured at two (2). Students deemed exemplary would be measured at three (3).

TABLE 3: The learning outcome scoring rubric currently used to assess the Master of Public Administration program curriculum.

Learning Outcome	Developing (1 pt.)	Good (2 pts.)	Exemplary (3 pts.)
<p>Learning Outcome 1: Using the major theories underlying the field of public administration students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.</p>	<p>Student does not fully articulate nor identify the major theories and concepts of public administration, and does not exhibit the ability to utilize these theories and concepts in addressing public problems.</p>	<p>Student can articulate the major concepts and theories of public administration, and is able to compare the merits of competing theories, and exhibits the ability to utilize these theories and concepts in effectively addressing public problems.</p>	<p>Student is able to articulate the major theories and concepts of public administration, and can critically assess the merits of these perspectives from multiple and competing points of view. Student is able to utilize these theories and concepts in creating innovative and effective solutions to public problems.</p>

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<p>Learning Outcome 2: Students can articulate and apply a public service perspective in their demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.</p>	<p>Student is unable to fully articulate and apply a public service perspective through demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.</p>	<p>Student is able to differentiate between varying organizational structures present in the public and nonprofit sectors and articulate and apply a public service perspective based on the goals and objectives of these sectors.</p>	<p>Student is able to differentiate between varying organizational structures present in the public and nonprofit sector, and compare and contrast to private sector organizations in terms of both structure and goals and objectives.</p>
<p>Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to participate in the public policy process through analysis and application of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of a public policy or program.</p>	<p>Student is unable to fully apply quantitative or qualitative evidence in determining public policy or program effectiveness.</p>	<p>Student understands and can apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods to determine policy or program effectiveness.</p>	<p>Student shows a thorough ability to apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative methodologies to complex public policy and program issues.</p>
<p>Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to describe the public policy process and the administrator's role in that process.</p>	<p>Student cannot fully describe the public policy process and cannot fully explain the administrator's role within the process.</p>	<p>Student can describe the public policy process and fully explain the administrator's role within the process.</p>	<p>Student demonstrates a thorough and nuanced understanding of the public policy process and can fully explain the arguments for and against a role for the administrator at each level.</p>
<p>Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions using moral reasoning skills.</p>	<p>Student can identify basic ethical problems in public administration, but does not fully grasp the nuances and ambiguities of those problems. As a result, student cannot create appropriate solutions to complex ethical problems.</p>	<p>Student can identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions to various types of ethical problems using moral reasoning skills.</p>	<p>Student can identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions to complex ethical problems using moral reasoning skills.</p>
<p>Learning Outcome 6: Students will participate in and contribute to the policy process through preparation and analysis of a public</p>	<p>Student is unable to fully explain the basic components of a public budget and is unable to properly analyze public</p>	<p>Student demonstrates a good grasp of budgeting components, including types of budgets and the budgeting cycle. Student</p>	<p>Student exhibits a thorough grasp of budgeting components and processes, and can articulate the important</p>

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budget in order to lead and manage in public governance.	budget information for use in making public management decisions.	can analyze budget information for use in making effective management decisions.	policy functions of a public budget.
Learning Outcome 7: Students can manage the major components of a personnel system within an organizational setting, understand the nuances of effectively motivating and managing personnel, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.	Student can describe some major components of a personnel system, but does not understand basic theories underlying the management and motivation of personnel or communications with a diverse workforce and citizenry.	Student is able to identify and discuss the major components of a personnel system, and can demonstrate how these components are used to manage and motivate personnel and interact with a diverse workforce and citizenry.	Student exhibits a thorough grasp of the four major components of a personnel system, and can articulate how each component can be used to effectively manage and motivate personnel and interact with a diverse workforce and citizenry.

Utilizing the above rubric, all core courses within the MPA program are evaluated annually. Faculty has mapped learning goals to learning outcomes and to specific core courses within the MPA curriculum as follows:

TABLE 4:

Learning Outcome	Learning Goal	Course Assessed (See Class Key Below)							
		PBAD 7130	PBAD 7134	PBAD 7230	PBAD 7430	PBAD 7530	PBAD 7531	PBAD 7631	PBAD 7638
LO 1	LG 1		X	X	X			X	X
	LG 2		X	X	X			X	X
LO 2	LG 3		X		X			X	
	LG 4		X		X			X	
LO 3	LG 5					X	X		
	LG 6					X			X
	LG 7					X	X		
LO 4	LG 8								X
	LG 9								X
LO 5	LG 10	X							X
	LG 11	X							X
	LG 12	X							X
LO 6	LG 13			X					X
	LG 14			X					X
LO 7	LG 15				X				
	LG 16				X				X
	LG 17				X				

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Class Key:

- PBAD 7130 – Ethics for Public Serving Organizations
- PBAD 7134 – Public and Nonprofit Sector Management
- PBAD 7230 – Budgeting in Public Serving Organizations
- PBAD 7430 – Public Human Resource Management
- PBAD 7530 – Research Methods for Public Serving Organizations
- PBAD 7531 – Public Program Evaluation
- PBAD 7631 – Foundations of Public Administration
- PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)

Student artifacts (in the form of a major course project or examination) are collected and assessed annually by the MPA faculty. Artifacts are direct measures of student learning that have been linked to student learning goals and from goals to program student learning outcomes as shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5:

Learning Outcome	Learning Goal	Class	Artifact
Learning Outcome 1: Using the major theories underlying the field of public administration students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.	LG 1: Students can distinguish between the major theories underlying the field of public administration. LG 2: Students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.	PBAD 7134 – Public and Nonprofit Sector Management	Student performance on essay on contemporary issues in public and nonprofit management in Public and Nonprofit Sector Management
		PBAD 7230 – Budgeting in Public Serving Organizations	Student performance on the midterm examination in Budgeting for Public Serving Organizations (specific questions)
		PBAD 7430 – Public Human Resource Management	Student performance on the final examination in Public Human Resource Management (specific questions)
		PBAD 7631 – Foundations of Public Administration	Student performance on the final examination in Foundations of Public Administration (specific questions)
		PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)	Student ability to express and apply theories and practical problem-solving techniques in the comprehensive examinations (specific questions)

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<p>Learning Outcome 2: Students can articulate and apply a public service perspective in their demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.</p>	<p>LG 3: Students can differentiate between the structures, components, goals, and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors and the private sector. LG 4: Students can articulate a public service perspective in their approach to addressing organizational problems.</p>	<p>PBAD 7134 – Public and Nonprofit Sector Management</p>	<p>Student performance on essay on contemporary issues in public and nonprofit management in Public and Nonprofit Sector Management</p>
		<p>PBAD 7430 – Public Human Resource Management</p>	<p>Student performance on the final examination in Public Human Resource Management (specific questions)</p>
		<p>PBAD 7631 – Foundations of Public Administration</p>	<p>Student performance on the final examination in Foundations of Public Administration (specific questions)</p>
		<p>PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)</p>	<p>Student ability to differentiate between the structures, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors and the private sector in the comprehensive examinations (specific questions)</p>
<p>Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to participate in the public policy process through analysis and application of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of a public policy or program.</p>	<p>LG 5: Students demonstrate basic competence in quantitative and qualitative research methods. LG 6: Students are able to accurately interpret the results produced by analytical and statistical tools and methods. LG 7: Students are able to evaluate public policy or program effectiveness using quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence.</p>	<p>PBAD 7530 – Research Methods for Public Serving Organizations</p>	<p>Student performance on a statistical analysis assignment</p>

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		PBAD 7531 – Public Program Evaluation	Student performance on final program evaluation project
		PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)	Student application and comprehension of analytical and statistical tools on comprehensive examinations (specific questions)
Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to describe the public policy process and the administrator’s role in that process.	LG 8: Students are able to describe the public policy process. LG 9: Students are able to describe the administrator’s role in the public policy process.	PBAD 7631 – Foundations of Public Administration	Student performance on the final examination in Foundations of Public Administration (specific questions)
		PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)	Student performance on the public policy analysis question on comprehensive examinations
Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions using moral reasoning skills.	LG 10: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration. LG 11: Students are able to assess the nuances and ambiguities of ethical situations. LG 12: Students are able to create appropriate solutions to ethical problems using moral reasoning skills.	PBAD 7130 – Ethics for Public Serving Organizations	Student performance on the final examination
		PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)	Student ability to address complex ethical situations and articulate solutions in the comprehensive examinations (specific questions)
Learning Outcome 6: Students will participate in and contribute to the policy process through preparation and analysis of a public budget in order to lead and manage in public governance.	LG 13: Students can prepare a budget for a small public organization. LG 14: Students can analyze a budget for public organizations of all sizes.	PBAD 7230 – Budgeting in Public Serving Organizations	Student performance on the midterm examination (specific questions)

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		PBAD 7631 – Foundations of Public Administration	Student performance on the final examination in Foundations of Public Administration (specific questions)
		PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)	Student application and comprehension of public budgeting preparation and analysis on comprehensive examinations (specific questions)
Learning Outcome 7: Students can manage the major components of a personnel system within an organizational setting, understand the nuances of effectively motivating and managing personnel, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.	LG 15: Students are able to explain the major components of a public personnel system. LG 16: Students can discuss the nuances of motivating and managing personnel. LG 17: Students are able to discuss the legal and organizational issues related to productive interaction with a diverse workforce and citizenry.	PBAD 7430 – Public Human Resource Management	Student performance on the final examination (specific questions)
		PBAD 7638 – Capstone Seminar (Comprehensive Examination)	Student application and comprehension of employee motivation and management on comprehensive examinations (specific questions)

B. Data collection and Integrity

The student artifacts noted in Table 5 are collected from the faculty member teaching each of the enumerated classes. Artifacts are stripped of grades and anonymized by department administration before distribution to the faculty as a whole for evaluation using the aforementioned standardized rubric presented in Table 3. Since learning outcomes are evaluated based on multiple artifacts from multiple classes, assessment to the learning goals first and then to the overall learning outcome has been adopted to provide a methodology for assessment that focuses faculty on specific components of each learning outcome that are much easier to assess. These artifacts represent direct measures of student learning that have been linked to course learning outcomes, overall program learning goals, program learning outcomes, and ultimately to the program mission statement. The utilization of learning goals as components of learning outcomes allows the department to assess for both NASPAA and SACs accreditation without having separate assessment processes for each.

Artifacts are provided to faculty for blind review, absent instructor comments, course grades, and student identifiers. Artifacts related to each learning goal and outcome is reviewed by multiple reviewers. Course



rotations are planned to allow for assessment of all core courses every year, along with the assessment of improvements identified during previous assessment cycles.

As noted in Tables 4 and 5, student artifacts from the following courses were collected and assessed: Ethics for Public Serving Organizations (PBAD 7130); Public and Nonprofit Sector Management (PBAD 7134); Budgeting in Public Serving Organizations (PBAD 7230); Public Human Resource Management (PBAD 7430); Research Methods for Public Serving Organizations (PBAD 7530); Public Program Evaluation (PBAD 7531); Foundations of Public Administration (PBAD 7631); and the Capstone Seminar (PBAD 7638). Taken together, these courses comprise the complete 21 core required credit hours in the MPA program plus the comprehensive examinations that occur in both the Spring and Fall semesters. Moreover, due to the structure of the MPA curriculum, each of these courses is offered at least once per academic year—as opposed to many of the program’s elective seminars that are offered only once per three or four semesters.

As noted in Table 5, direct measures of assessment are used for each of the learning goals and learning outcomes. All of the learning outcomes are assessed using multiple measures that are taken from multiple courses (i.e., student artifacts). Each artifact can, and most often does, provide measures related to more than one learning goal and/or learning outcome. For example, a final examination in Public Human Resource Management (PBAD 7430) will have questions related to Learning goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, and 17 and thus learning outcomes 1, 2, and 7. Faculty assesses student learning not based on the overall artifact, but on the specific portions of the artifact that relate to specific learning goals and learning outcomes. Having artifacts that support multiple learning goals and outcomes allows the overall assessment to be based on performance in a number of classes rather than just on one artifact from a single class.

Faculty members also undertake an assessment of student performance on the MPA program’s comprehensive examinations, which are required of every student in his or her final semester in the program. Many of the learning outcomes defined in the rubric are reassessed at this stage. In the Core portion of the examination, all students are required to respond to a “field” question, as well as address an additional two questions from a battery of five. In this sense, the comprehensive examination serves as a posttest on student learning, providing a comprehensive snapshot of student learning. The specific learning objectives tested on the comprehensive examination will depend upon the content of the “field” question and student choices for the second and third questions answered on the examination. Responses from the Concentration portion of the comprehensive examination can also be used for assessment to the extent questions relate to our defined learning outcomes. For example, the public policy question on the Concentration portion of the comprehensive examination is used to assess learning goals 8 and 9 and learning outcome 4. In the Concentration portion of the examination, students are required to answer a “field” question in their concentration (public management or nonprofit management) and select one additional question from a battery of five to seven questions. The number of additional questions on any particular examination depends on the number of different concentration courses students taking that examination have taken collectively for credit during their tenure in the program. For example, if ten public management students are sitting for the exam and collectively they have taken seven different concentration courses, then there will be seven “choice” questions on the comprehensive examination (one question corresponding to each course).

IV. TARGETS

The expectation is that 70 percent of students assessed will score at the “good” level and 10 percent will score at the “exemplary” level. Either “good” or “exemplary” will demonstrate mastery of the given outcome being assessed. This target is based upon analysis of students’ baseline results conducted by program faculty during the previous five assessment cycles. It has been our experience that a portion of students scoring at the

“Developing” level do not succeed in our program since a sustained 3.0 grade point average is required to remain, but the number of students who are excluded from the program rarely exceeds two to four percent. If there is a discrepancy of more than one point in any area of the rubric, a faculty meeting will be convened in order to collectively assess the artifacts that contribute to evidence of student learning and, ultimately, reach a consensus assessment with respect to that outcome.

V. FINDINGS

A. Presentation of results

The results are presented for each learning outcome and are broken down by the course(s) being assessed for that outcome.

Learning Outcome 1: Using the major theories underlying the field of public administration students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7134				
PBAD 7230				
PBAD 7430				
PBAD 7631				
PBAD 7638				
Totals		5		
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):

Learning Outcome 2: Students can articulate and apply a public service perspective in their demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7134				
PBAD 7430				
PBAD 7631				
PBAD 7638				
Totals				
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):



Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to participate in the public policy process through analysis and application of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of a public policy or program.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7530				
PBAD 7531				
PBAD 7638				
Totals				
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):

Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to describe the public policy process and the administrator's role in that process.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7631				
PBAD 7638				
Totals				
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):

Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions using moral reasoning skills.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7130				
PBAD 7638				
Totals				
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):

Learning Outcome 6: Students will participate in and contribute to the policy process through preparation and analysis of a public budget in order to lead and manage in public governance.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7230				
PBAD 7631				
PBAD 7638				
Totals				
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):

Learning Outcome 7: Students can manage the major components of a personnel system within an organizational setting, understand the nuances of effectively motivating and managing personnel, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

Course	N	Developing	Good	Exemplary
PBAD 7430				
PBAD 7638				
Totals				
Percentage				

Percentage demonstrating mastery of learning outcome (2 or 3 on the rubric):

B. Interpretation of results

Learning Outcome 1: Using the major theories underlying the field of public administration students can synthesize relevant information to address public problems.

Learning Outcome 2: Students can articulate and apply a public service perspective in their demonstrated knowledge of the structure, components, goals and objectives of the public and nonprofit sectors.

Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to participate in the public policy process through analysis and application of quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of a public policy or program.

Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to describe the public policy process and the administrator’s role in that process.

Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to identify ethical problems in public administration, assess the nuances and ambiguities of those ethical problems, and create appropriate solutions using moral reasoning skills.

Learning Outcome 6: Students will participate in and contribute to the policy process through preparation and analysis of a public budget in order to lead and manage in public governance.

Learning Outcome 7: Students can manage the major components of a personnel system within an organizational setting, understand the nuances of effectively motivating and managing personnel, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

VI. ACTION PLAN

A. Prior Year’s Action Plans - Implementation of previous year’s plan and student learning performance after implementation

Last Year’s Plan:

Implementation: