



*34th Annual Conference on*  
**TEACHING PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION**

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**



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**TROY UNIVERSITY**<sup>™</sup>

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## **PREFACE**

The 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Teaching Public Administration Conference was a grand success in exploring the myriad aspects of preparing the next generation of professionals in public service and improving the competences and leadership skills of those currently administering public and non-profit organizations. We are pleased to present these proceedings as a record of the many insightful researchers who attended. Although not all presentations are contained herein, we thank all presenters for their involvement in the success of the conference.

The goal of this conference is to showcase current research and innovative practices that prove relevant, accessible, and useful to public administration instructors. These proceedings highlight the dynamic and innovative approaches to teaching public administration introduced at the conference this year.

The conference was planned and conducted under the leadership of Pamela T. Dunning, PhD, Conference Chair. Our webmaster and videographer was John E. Dunning, PhD. They did an extraordinary job of bringing together and recording this outstanding conference.

We owe a special thank you to the Abstract Review Committee for providing thoughtful review and feedback to our participants: Bob Abbey, PhD, Bob Cunningham, PhD, Diane Kimoto, PhD, Margaret Stout, PhD, Murray Widener, PhD, Blue Wooldridge, PhD, and Lorne Mulder, MPA.

This was an exciting and enjoyable gathering. We greatly appreciate everyone who took part in recognizing the significant contributions of dedicated teachers in preparing and cultivating a workforce equipped to meet the unique fiscal, programmatic, and political challenges of public service.

Pamela A. Gibson, PhD  
Program Chair

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## **The Impact of Project 100% on Student Voting at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College**

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Project 100% began at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) as an ad hoc effort of various elements of the university community to increase student turnout for recent elections. These measures included the placement of a voting station on campus by the Cameron County Elections Office, deputizing students and staff as volunteer voter registrars, various 'Rock the Vote' events plus assignments and activities by various professors intended to promote civic engagement among the students.

UTB/TSC serves a primarily Hispanic (94%) student population in an area with relatively low income and high rates of unemployment and poverty. Since it is primarily a commuter school with relatively few students from outside the region or other states, conflicts between students and the larger community over the rights of students to vote in the community are minimal. The campus is located only blocks from the border crossing with Mexico, and many students, faculty, and staff regularly go back and forth between the two nations.

This paper will examine the impact of Project 100% on the 2010 Election turnout by comparing turnout at the campus voting location to the previous midterm election in 2006. There will also be examination of the election results to analyze the extent to which the voting of UTB/TSC students reflected or differed from larger state and national patterns, both for Hispanics and in general.

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## **ICT and its Impact on Classroom Learning**

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Prior to the infusion of information and communication technology systems (ICT), especially the development of social networks, teaching public administration courses relied heavily on lectures, case-studies and assimilations based on textbooks, microfiche and archival records. Today, with the infusion of ICT to every aspect in our lives and the accessibility of information, new opportunities and challenges are presented to teaching public administration. Opportunities include benefiting from interconnected, fluid, and vast sources of global information that can link the classroom with developing events and be part of an ongoing dynamic. Challenges include the saturation of information, duplicity, inaccuracy issues, and marginalization of rigorous research development skills. This paper will address the development of ICT as a catalyst for change, and its impact of transforming classroom teaching into forums for global participation-observation.

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## **For the People, By the People, and From the People: Using Blogs and Social Media to Teach Public Administration and Civic Engagement**

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Blogs, tweets, and updates. Social media is a critical part of today's global conversations between citizens, non-governmental organizations, and public agencies, as seen in the explosion of blogging (such as the U.S. Department of State's DipNote), micro-blogging (e.g. Oxfam on Twitter), and social sites (including the British Embassy's presence on Facebook and Governor Schwarzenegger's youtube channel). This is a conversation without borders because social media increasingly plays into discussions of globalization and democracy, as seen now with technology disseminating Kenyan draft constitutions in local dialects. So, amidst the seminal texts and current events embedded within our public administration courses, how should we be looking at blogs and other strategies as valuable case studies and teaching models? Whether analyzing how a small municipality blogs to seek citizen input, or whether the Twitterverse can help an NGO in its disaster relief, the larger study is about how this inverted pyramid is reorganizing democracy from the grassroots up. Specifically, this presentation focuses on social media, civic engagement, and how public administrators are adjusting to this open landscape.

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We're finding that plunging our students directly into cyberspace is adding richer insights into teaching and learning about how groups are interacting with multiple, real-time audiences. At Presidio Graduate School, where sustainability is embedded within the Masters of Public Administration program, the first cohort is moving from a fear of 140-character tweets into posting on its own blog, hosted by Triple Pundit, a green business blog that includes critical conversations about how NGOs and municipalities are increasing their online green presence, such as the Environmental Defense Fund's new efforts to work with Wal-Mart. Similarly, at Troy University, eCampus classes now use Wimba Classroom for online student presentations, Wimba Pronto for instant messaging, and have incorporated blogs and journals into Blackboard; faculty are also using Facebook pages to stay in touch with advisees and alumni. This presentation will summarize the best practices (and other tips) proven effective in teaching about public administration issues of development and sustainability in our world of social media.

One way to do this is by comparing and measuring different strategies being used by groups to successfully (or not so successfully) bring real-time issues straight to the citizenry. Whereas cities and NGOs once relied on mass mailings for events and signatures, new 'social software' is organizing online communities into strong advocacy groups, encouraging site visitors to propose and respond to strategies, priorities, and directions of policies and organizations. Indeed, such grassroots success is changing the way we could be teaching how public administrators (and their audiences) are using new modes of empowerment.

In addition to presenting research findings, teaching strategies and tools, we also argue that higher education interests in public administration could share strategies to involve their students in the process of civic engagement. We think that one pedagogy solution is better communication, to amass the strength of college communities involved and interested in learning how to harness the power of such skills. Whether promoting sustainability or issuing warnings about natural disasters, social media is penetrating many rural and other interior populations within a locality or interest group. And the more we can integrate such voices 'for the people, by the people, and from the people' our public administration efforts can better lead to stronger civic engagement.

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## **The State of Online Education in Public Affairs and Administration Programs**

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The advances in, and diffusion of, technology have resulted in a shift in the approach to teaching and learning resulting in a growth in online education. Programs in Public Affairs and Administration are increasingly transitioning to online education. There is, however, limited information on the state of online education in the area of Public Affairs and Administration. Utilizing a dataset compiled from content analysis of MPA program websites, we will provide an overview of which programs are currently online or in the state of transitioning to online programs. We have also worked extensively with National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) to create a survey instrument that allows programs to answer questions about online education. We intend to combine both datasets to create a thorough picture of the current landscape of online education in the MPA field including the extent, nature, barriers and problems of online education among NASPAA accredited Public Affairs and Administration programs.

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## **A Model of Administrative Themes for Use across the Curriculum**

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The question of what transactions should be left as far as possible to voluntary initiative and agreement and what should come under the regulation of the public is a question of time, place and concrete conditions that can only be known by careful observation and reflective investigation.

John Dewey

A proposed model categorizes practitioner perspective and engagement. It asserts that in an era of limitations, we determine anew the boundaries of public responsibility. The model is sited in the first course where students develop mastery of foundation concepts through typical learning modalities: cases, books, articles and testing. This model contextualizes student learning and practice in thematic realms, allowing students to map concrete interests onto more abstract questions of public governance.

As students move forward in the curriculum, they have additional opportunities to deconstruct personal experiences through reference to the goals and subtexts of this public values oriented model.

Further, students are increasingly comfortable querying a search engine and settling for initial screens of results. Questions they formulate can be very specific, and so their results may not reference the more general public management literature. For example, a student could express interest in production problems of secure state ID cards developed per new Federal guidelines following passage of the REAL ID Act of 2005 simply as 'How long will it take DMV to process my driver's license renewal?' In this case the framework would help the students place the specific interest in proximity to the general governing challenges of Managing the Hollow State (outsourced producer) and Promises and Risks of Technology.

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## The Model's Eight Challenges

**The New Normal:** Flat or reduced public sector revenues require efficiencies and cutbacks in services and public employment.

**Managing the Hollow State:** Increasingly, direct delivery of public sector services and functions is outsourced to nonprofit or for-profit organizations.

**Citizen Participation and Engagement:** From direct participation in public hearings to policy making via voter referendum, initiative and recall: new and old modes.

**Demographic Change and Diversity:** Current and projected changes in population on the basis of age, race, ethnic origin, gender, education, urbanization, or other factors alter the civic landscape.

**Comparative Administration (The Global Context):** To what degree can best practices in public programs be borrowed from other industrialized democratic nations?

**Promises and Risks of Technologies:** Technological aids are essential for evidence-based public decision-making and operational efficiencies. However, they also violate individual privacy, limit dissent, and expand damages in military conflict.

**The Governance Crisis:** Persistent structural deficits, political deadlock and deteriorating infrastructure raise serious questions about the viability of states' governing institutions.

**The Problem with Federalism:** A renewed struggle in the courts and in legislative arenas is redefining the balance between federal preemption and states' rights.

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## **AmeriCorps: Love It or Lose It**

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This paper focuses on the extraordinary impact of the national service program, AmeriCorps. By exploring the rich history of government subsidized initiatives, we are able to recognize that the integration of AmeriCorps has substantially improved issues in social justice, increased environmental sustainability, and has positively impacted market systems in the United States (Perry, Thompson, Tschirhart, Mesch, & Lee, 1999). Additionally, the paper highlights the history of service in the United States, the importance of the government funded initiatives, and the role they play in the teaching of volunteerism.

President George Bush declared nearly 20 years ago that volunteering is something close to a patriotic obligation in serving America (Wofford, 2002). In the spirit of nationalism, civic engagement began in the period of the founding fathers; the American people desired a sense of community and service to others was the foundation in achieving this unity. Poverty, hunger, and homelessness are just a sample of the many hardships facing Americans today. With this in mind, President Clinton created a domestic service organization in 1991 called AmeriCorps, which has become the foundation for lifelong service initiatives in America (Wofford, 2002). By learning and teaching the history of service initiatives in America, it easier to understand both the need and significance of government funded service programs.

Just as the history of volunteerism is rich, the impact of AmeriCorps is unbounded. Since its initiation, an estimated 500,000 members have served their country and had an economic impact of two billion dollars (AmeriCorps, 2011). The lifelong effects on AmeriCorps members are exceptional as they experience heightened leadership skills, an awareness of social and environmental issues in America, and a general sense of optimism for the future (Briggs & Peterson, 2010). By creating awareness of AmeriCorps and other service initiatives in the classroom, students learn the importance of civic engagement and are able to apply classroom knowledge to real word situations.

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Service programs act as a teaching tool for students because they provide opportunities for connections outside the classroom to the greater world at hand; they do so while allowing for collaboration between Americans from diverse backgrounds to accomplish a collective outcome. Additionally, they bring classroom curriculum alive by placing students in capacities that encourage continued education to combat the social and environmental issues they confront during their year of committed service work.

Times are tough, yet volunteer rates continue to soar and are at an all-time high. Higher education is placing an emphasis on active citizenship with various service programs, children are beginning to volunteer at a younger age, and opportunities for civic engagement are limitless. The initiation of AmeriCorps has undoubtedly begun an ambitious movement in the United States. The future of volunteerism is bright, and service initiatives will continue to act as irreplaceable teaching aids for students and citizens alike.

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## **'Ministry' in Public Administration: Service in Government By and For the People**

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An oftentimes neglected dimension of public administration practice in the United States is captured in two terms, 'ministry' and 'minister.' In many nations, these titles identify public agencies and those serving in them. What is 'ministry' in public administration? What does it mean to 'minister' in public administration? This paper responds to these questions by reviewing what the term 'administration' has meant historically. First to be explored is St. Paul's understanding, who called it a "gift of the Holy Spirit" which is to be used for the purpose of building up the community (1 Corinthians 12:28). This understanding is then traced through Ferdinand Toennies (2004) discussion of administration within the form of social organization he called a 'community' (Gemeinschaft). Chester Barnard's (1968) description of the 'moral factor' of administration is then explored for its implications concerning how public administration can forge more democratic organizations that emerge out of mutual need, are constructed upon the bedrock of shared purpose, and operate effectively toward the end of fulfilling that purpose. This paper closes by considering what the terms 'ministry' and 'minister' suggest for those who teach public administration and whose intent is to introduce aspiring public administrators in a government that is by and for the people.

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## **Public Administration 101: Giving Voice to Undergraduate Education**

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In the interdisciplinary field of public administration, professional education hinges on the “mutual efforts and quality combinations of critical knowledge from a variety of social disciplines and methods” to yield real opportunities for change (Vigoda, 2003, p. 8). The exercises described in this paper serve as an undergraduate resource to prepare students through participation in the public dialogues at the local, national, and global levels. The exercises also celebrate the strength of the public and nonprofit sectors by examining their historical roots, the policy issues related to the current climate of opinion, and the interrelationships of government, business, and nonprofits. Furthermore, this paper suggests that when core skills-such as boundary spanning, action learning, and social entrepreneurship- are connected within an introductory undergraduate course, they serve as the “professional and intellectual center of gravity for the practice of public administration” (Henry, Goodsell, Lynn, Stivers, & Wamsley, 2009, p. 119).

What makes the three skills described above so critical to the practice of public administration? The development of boundary spanning talents promotes individuals' readiness to respect differences, an eagerness to learn, and a willingness to accept that there are many ways of viewing the world while attaining viable solutions. Action learning improves “performance, promotes learning, and positions organizations to adapt better in turbulent times” (Dilworth, 1998, p. 28). Social entrepreneurship provides the opportunity to develop social values that “bear inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage, and fortitude” and “release trapped potential...ensuring a better future for society at large” (Martin and Osberg, 2007, p. 35). When public and nonprofit administration courses (a) appreciate human experience as an act of social usefulness, (b) empower students to craft alternative positions to concerns, and (c) rectify present and future problems with acquired proficiencies, they promote “the development of practical wisdom” (Henry, Goodsell, Lynn, Stivers, & Wamsley, 2009, p. 123).

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This paper approaches its learning objectives through a theoretical foundation which rests upon the role and practice of theory to clarify strategies and milestones while guiding personal and organizational choices. For example, achievements of the objectives associated with boundary spanning are illustrated through presentations where students employ YouTube-type videos to enhance their understanding of public administration concepts. Action learning is realized through the creation of recommendations governing the responsible usage of power in serving the public interest. Finally, concerns regarding social entrepreneurship are delineated as students learn to become 'wise consumers' in terms of balancing their volunteer involvement and civic commitment.

The initial outcomes of these teaching efforts lead to multiple job skills which improve students' abilities for thinking creatively and critically, using information effectively, and framing diverse forms of knowledge through the creation of compelling arguments. The long term outcomes of such educational frameworks result in an appreciation for one's own culture and the merits in articulating its ethical placement alongside others.

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## **Communication and Public Administration: Preparing Future Administrators in a Technological Age**

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Recent statistics and trends have stressed the need for undergraduate and graduate students to strengthen their writing and communication skills prior to entering the work force. Although the means of communication have changed in the last decade, the need for well-written and audience-centered information has not changed. Additionally, as highlighted in case studies and policy reports, public managers hiring newly graduated students continue to highly value writing and communication skills.

Well-written, concise, and audience-centered writing in government has been consistently supported at the federal level of government (e.g., President Carter's Executive Orders and President Clinton's Presidential Memorandum). Yet it was not until President Obama's initiative to create a more open and transparent government that the Plain Writing Act of 2010 passed. This new law requires federal agencies to take an audience-centered approach to produce documents that are easier to understand by the public. One of the goals of this new law is to increase public participation in the various processes of government. The passage of this law stresses the increasing need to educate future public administrators to write and communicate more concisely and to remain focused on the document's audience(s).

Some universities have not only recognized this need, but have institutionalized solutions. Specifically, this need has been the center of faculty discussions at a large university located in a southeastern, metropolitan area where this study originates. One solution is the creation of a mandatory, undergraduate administrative writing course, in addition to grammar, APA style, and editing online modules available to those graduate students needing to improve their skills. The course incorporates rules-based and content-based approaches to teaching grammar to traditional undergraduate students (also known as millennials) and older, returning students. Short writing and editing assignments

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completed either individually or in groups are scheduled throughout the semester to mimic a public sector work environment. The students use a variety of mediums to complete and submit their assignments, including electronic collaborative learning tools (i.e., Google Docs, discussion threads, and email). Results from pre and post-tests in this course indicate that students' application of grammatical and formatting rules increased. This paper reviews the current writing and communication trends in the public sector, incorporates the private sector dominated literature, reviews the results of the pre and post-tests, and concludes with recommendations for public administration faculty and students.

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## **Ethical, Academic and Practical Considerations for Online Teaching: Does the Search for Quality and Integrity Come at the Expense of Academic Freedom?**

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The Internet has clearly evolved to be the new revolution in educational delivery. Online learning at the post-secondary level has come of age. A 2008 Sloan Consortium report on the state of online education in the United States revealed some startling information. For example, at the turn of this century approximately 10 percent of post-secondary enrollments at degree-granting institutions were in online courses or programs; but, by 2007, the number had grown to over 20 percent. This growth translated into an average annual increase of nearly 20 percent at a time when overall enrollment growth in higher education averaged only around 2 percent. Schools recognized that students were voting with the click of a mouse, and, by 2007, the percentage of schools defining online education as critical to their long-term strategy had grown to more than 70 percent of public institutions and more than 53 percent of private colleges and universities. Online courses and programs are now offered by universities large and small, including many of the nation's most prestigious schools.

Schools throughout the nation have looked to the rapidly evolving technological medium as a solution to education delivery challenges and as a way to expand existing education markets. The focus on technology and its inherent flexibility has evolved to the point where some schools offer courses to be completed on handheld personal digital devices. Despite this rush to distance learning, the medium and its accompanying technologies have evoked mixed reactions among students, administrators and faculty. It is clear, that regardless of

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the reactions to online distance learning as a delivery system, its use is expanding at an extraordinary pace.

As Internet-based education has transitioned from its initial status as "the classroom of the future" to a pedagogical mainstay, it has been subjected to significant scrutiny by its proponents and detractors alike. The pervasiveness and visibility of online instruction has served to magnify its strengths (e.g., the benefits that accrue to an asynchronous format) and to reveal areas of concern (e.g., maintaining academic/ethical integrity, especially in online testing, and issues relating to oversight and academic freedom).

The search for academic integrity has led to technological innovations and administrative oversight efforts which are not only significantly different for online courses than face to face course, but which can arguably serve to restrict academic freedom for practical, logistical and administrative reasons.

It is the purpose of this paper to elaborate on these complex issues from administrative, practical, ethical and academic perspectives to encourage further discussion on overcoming evolving tensions related to online teaching.

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## Teaching Ethics Using Literature

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Given the moral and ethical dilemma found in the public sector, teaching ethics in schools of public administration has become an imperative. Examples of immorality and corruption in government have become commonplace. The consistency of reports on such behavior is suggestive of some sort of malignancy prompting one to believe that a virus has afflicted the behaviors of public officials who should be there to serve the public good. From an epidemiological perspective, it is as if a contagion of the mind has inflicted the psyche of government officials (Mitchell, 1999).

Unfortunately, the literature reveals that, “ethics [has] received intermittent attention in professional journals and in the curriculum offering of schools associated with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration” (Maroney, et al. 2007). Moreover, a survey of 76 NASPAA accredited-schools reveals the teaching methodology employed in the teaching of ethics in schools of public administration has not changed in twenty years. Institutional offerings reveal a variety of pedagogical approaches including case studies and other traditional approaches such as group discussions and lectures; the effectiveness of which is questionable.

This paper explores an underutilized method of teaching ethics in schools of public administration. This paper proposes the uses of literature in the teaching of ethics. Support for such an approach is prevalent in the literature but minimally utilized. Educators such as Allen Bloom (1987) and Christine Sommer (1998) aver that the educational system in America is devoid of materials that would teach our young people to understand, respect and protect the institutions that protect us and preserve our free and democratic society.

Hetzner and Schmidt (1986) argue that in order to teach ethics, one must include a curriculum for familiarizing students with a full-range of moral and political philosophical literature from which they can garner the substantive and methodological guidance necessary to sorting out good reasons for their administrative actions and public policy.

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This approach allows for the study of a variety of moral philosophical theories which encourages the kind of reasoning required of administrators in making ethical decisions.

Further support for utilizing classic literature in teaching ethics can be found in the writings of Yoder and Denhardt (2001, citing H.T. Edmondson, III): "The liberal arts are able to provide life experience vicariously. Hypothetical case studies attempt to do this, of course, but the experience they provide often reduces the involvement of the student intellect."

Frank Marini (1992) gives an example of the possibilities. Marini's exploration of public administration ethics in Sophocles' *Antigone* serves as an excellent source to generate questions of civil disobedience, the challenge to authority, one's perspective of a higher law relating to family as well as leadership and obligation to society and the letter of the law.

Thus, this paper suggests an alternative approach to teaching ethics and explores the use of literature to teach ethics in a field in need of alternative approaches to ensure a more ethically and morally correct public sector.

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## **Preparing for Public Service in the Era of Hyper Globalization**

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Citizens are actively redefining the role of the nation state worldwide with calls by the people for governments of the people based upon the rule of law. This global idealization of the American system of government comes at a time when the role of governments within the United States is severely challenged by the anti-government sentiments that pit government workers against the broader society. The teaching of public administration in the era of hyper globalization must embrace these contradictions as well as many others which reflect the rising expectations of the world's people, on one side, and the demands of the marketplace, local, national and global, on the other. The assumption is that the continuation of democracy in the United States and the facilitation of global democratic development are premised upon critical thinking. This paper takes up where Ann Newman Meredith, author of "Sharpening Critical Thinking Skills in a Public Administration Class" (Journal of Public Administration Education, 1997) left off by examining the role of critical thinking today in preparation for a career in public service.

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## **Teaching MPA Research Methods and Data Analysis as Hybrid Courses: Advantages and Challenges for Distance Course Delivery**

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Students often perceive research methods and statistics courses as being one of the most difficult and uninteresting courses in the curriculum. This perception is based on students' unfamiliarity with the process of research, their inhibitions toward mathematically oriented course work, and the horror stories they have heard from other students. These perceptions can have negative effects on both students and instructors, even when the instructor is keenly interested in the subject matter. Teaching these courses through distance methods presents even more of a challenge.

This paper will discuss the literature on teaching research methods and data analysis and apply it to hybrid courses offered in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at Florida Gulf Coast University. Research Applications in Public Administration (PAD 6708) and Data Analysis in Public Service (PAD 6701) are required core graduate courses in the MPA program. These courses are an introduction to methods, techniques, and data analysis used in public management research. Topics include problem formulation, research design, survey construction and data collection and analysis utilizing SPSS.

The following questions will be addressed:

How best can we approach the subject of research methods in a professional program?  
Two courses or one?  
Academic research methods or practical research applications?  
How can a professor make the course effective in the on-line environment?

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Engaging student interest at a distance.

Ensuring effective learning without being able to see the 'lights go on'

For most MPA students who are in-service practitioners, these courses are a return to academia and the least applied. It is important to apply the knowledge from the masters courses to their administrative positions and bring it back to them and how they can use it in their positions through research and interpreting data.

These courses bring the students' administrative capability to another level. Students become more objective in posing the research question correctly and capacity for analysis of the data with the ability to answer questions i.e., what's going on in the data, how is it working, what does it look like, what is it saying?

Teaching students to conduct statistical analysis has been the biggest challenge in delivering these courses, even with an excellent textbook for support. However, the extent to which students understand the process after they have overcome the initial conceptual hurdle is significant. Overall, the benefits of delivering a technology intensive course outweigh the costs, even through distance.

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## **Maximizing Reflexivity and Praxis by Recognizing and Counteracting the Constraints Imposed by Stimulus-Response Learning**

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According to the literature, active learning strategies are the most effective means of enhancing the students' reflective, critical, and reflexive capabilities. The Task Force on Educating for Excellence in the MPA Degree acknowledged the essential role of active learning when it advocated the use of pedagogical strategies such as classroom exercises and collaborative projects with agencies. However, the extent to which these strategies foster reflexivity and promote praxis is limited by stimulus-response learning. As is suggested by the nomenclature, stimulus-response learning is predicated upon repetitive stimuli that elicits the desired responses. Within the education system, lectures and discussions reinforce information contained in the assigned readings. When these stimuli are supplemented by case studies, problem sets, and other assignments, students are conditioned to decipher the appropriate responses. Due to this process, the literature indicates that it is not possible to disentangle the extent to which a student's answers are a reaction to the stimuli (i.e., the replication of questions/issues they previously encountered in the course) or an indicator of deep learning.

To measure the pervasiveness of stimulus-response learning, the authors developed a questionnaire that was distributed to students enrolled in MPA courses offered at a mid-western university. Even though most of the program's MPA faculty utilize active learning strategies, the findings suggest that the students' fixation on earning A's has perpetuated the preference for stimulus-response learning, i.e., the process of determining what the instructor wants and, within this context, producing the appropriate responses/materials. Given these findings, a program's success in cultivating reflexivity and praxis is impacted

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by the adoption of strategies that counteract the preference for stimulus-response learning and thereby encourage students to become more self-directed and enhance their skills as lifelong learners. Several of these strategies are discussed in the paper's final section.

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## **Taking the Classroom to Town Hall: The Experiences of a Partnership between James Madison University's Public Policy and Administration Programs and the Town of Elkton**

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In today's complex environment of public administration, it is imperative to share knowledge, information, skills, and resources in order to achieve greatness. Talent and opportunity for advancement must be sought out from wherever they exist and incorporated into the goal at hand. This paper presents the successes and failures of a yearlong partnership, Partners in Community Leadership, between James Madison University's Public Policy and Administration programs and the Town of Elkton, Virginia's Town Manager's Office.

This partnership is a part of a larger plan to improve public trust in local government by providing the highest quality citizen-focused services in an efficient and effective manner. The projects described in this paper specifically focus on public input, ensuring that the needs and desires of the public are put first. This partnership is reflective of a growing trend in colleges and universities to better-connect campuses with their communities through community service and civic engagement. Transformations in the organizational culture of both universities and government entities have provided new opportunities for student learning in community-based settings and for enhanced public problem-solving.

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We provide an overview of the literature on community service-learning to situate this collaboration within a larger framework for university engagement. We then introduce both partners and examine the context in which the partnership program developed. The partnership between the Town of Elkton and the JMU MPA program uses a class-based consulting model that combines service learning with applied research. Next, we describe each of the projects, the resulting recommendations made by student researchers, and the implementation process. As a result of these projects, recommendations were made based upon the results of public opinion surveys and comparison with similar operations in other local governments of comparable demographics, including population, median household income, etc.

There were three major projects within this partnership: an evaluation of the operations of the Elkton Police Department, an evaluation of the programs and services of the Elkton Area Community Center, and the development of an Economic Development Plan for the Town. The evaluation projects were conducted in a Program Evaluation class while the Economic Development Plan was created in Urban Policy and Regionalism. In order to evaluate the immediate effectiveness of the partnership projects, we conducted surveys of stake holders on both sides of each partnership to gauge their opinion of the partnership's effectiveness. Surveying stakeholders allows project administrators to understand how future partnerships can be improved so that at least the experience of the participants will be improved. For each project, we evaluated the experiences of students in the program, municipal staff members, and Town Council members.

In the immediate future, the Town and the MPA program intend to work collaboratively in order to improve conditions for residents of the Town and to expand academic opportunities for students. Subsequent projects will continue to be based on the Town's needs as well as what resources are available at the University.

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## **The University and the Citizen-Student: Redefining a Democratic Learning Experience**

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The role of the university in promoting democracy is centered largely on the transmittal of knowledge to those who are willing participants in the educational process. Success is measured through classroom and professional accomplishments demonstrating higher levels of understanding and more recently the application of knowledge gained via service-learning and civic engagement projects. Significant accomplishments include the incubation of state, national and world leaders championing democratic principles and improved understanding and in some cases better solutions to pressing societal problems.

We are, however, challenged by a student body that is in many cases are inadequately prepared for the challenges of democracy and learning. They lack technical and social skills, and are faced with financial exigencies. The university, particularly in urban areas, absorbs these challenges in the face of increasing demands for accountability. The social and economic focus on outcome measurement and individualization in both the academic and non-academic environment creates a tension that has moved us away from the practice and teaching of community and participatory representation. Students once willing and prepared to answer the question, 'how might I best serve my country?' are now asking how might their country best serve them? This change in values was less concerning in the context of extended economic growth and prosperity but left us surprised when we realized the social continuity afforded by community was missing in the face of economic and social crises.

Relying on the political and educational theories of Dewey and others, universities recently have embraced civic engagement as a response to isolationist, individualistic approaches to the educational experience. Civic engagement, a well-researched approach, largely re-engages the willing learner and teacher in a form democratic learning. This paper will briefly summarize the theoretical underpinnings of this educational approach and

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discusses its usefulness as a method of promoting democratic values. The paper also offers a critique of the focus on engagement as the university's solution to the problem of individualization. A complementary approach is identified and proposed as a necessary component to a return to democratization of education. This approach requires the university to ask and answer the question, 'Who is the student?' and suggests that a move to directly educate the citizen, non-paying student, is required to rebuild the foundation for true democratic practices, including discourse, voting, and participatory action. The urban university can return to its roots, and lead the way in and outside the classroom. The paper concludes by providing case examples of activities structured to develop an interface between the citizen and the student that can assist in the long-run promotion of democratic principles, where the "individual and society are organic to each other" (Dewey, 1969).

### **Reference**

Dewey, *The Ethics of Democracy in The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898*, vol. 1. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. 1969

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## **Applying Framing Theory to Examination of State/Local Government Pension Issues in Public Administration Classes**

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Until recent years, discussion of state and local government pensions was reserved mostly to academic journals, professional conferences, policy institutes and perhaps some coverage in government budget and accounting classes. This no longer is the case--as witnessed by the central role of pension funding issues in strategies to promote state/local fiscal sustainability and more immediately to forestall undesirable outcomes such as government bankruptcy or financial receivership. With government pensions joining complex policy subjects such as Medicaid finance, infrastructure and deferred maintenance budgets, and the equity and adequacy of state/local government revenue systems, public administration instructors are likely to devote more time to surveying the pensions topic, with students themselves more likely to raise questions about what is happening in this puzzling and sometimes emotionally-charged area.

This paper draws from framing theory as developed by scholars in social and political communications research along with media studies. Framing theory has emerged as an important scholarly tool for researching and understanding a diverse set of subjects—e.g., messages in political campaigns; media coverage of officeholders and elections; informational biases in media coverage of minority groups; and patterns in how public officials define public policy issues. Framing theory has great potential in public administration pedagogy to the extent that instructors enhance awareness of how sources of information and data may be structured, presented or packaged in different or perhaps subtle, nuanced ways.

The state and local government pensions subject lends itself well to framing theory. We encounter many different ways for key information to be presented by sources likely to be consulted by the instructor in lecture preparation and the student in research/writing projects. Depending on the source of information, there may be meaningful differences in elements such as problem definition, interpretation of data, analysis of key issues, and identification of policy options or remedial strategies. This variation means that any

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discussion of state and local government pensions presents instructional challenges that range from which information and data to present in class on through ensuring that students leave with a knowledge base that serves the public interest in cultivating the next generation of public officials, administrators and—very important—informed citizens.

The paper is a qualitative-based analysis of prominent examples of sources of information that figure in contemporary policy debates over government pension system funding, administration and reform. While considering governmental organizations such as the USGAO, the primary focus is on how major national and state level institutions and associations define and interpret challenges and issues facing state and local governments regarding their pension systems. At the national level, major organizations examined include the Pew Center on the States, the Tax Foundation, and the Government Finance Officers Association. Illinois is used as a case study to explore framing at the state/local level, by considering organizations such as the Civic Committee of the Chicago Commercial Club, the Civic Federation's Institute for Illinois Fiscal Sustainability, the Center on Tax and Budget Accountability, and the University of Illinois's Institute of Government and Public Affairs.