

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Metropolitan School of Professional Studies - Graduate Programs
AY 2009-10**

Key Assessment Findings

Metropolitan School of Professional Studies (MSPS) students pursuing the Master of Arts in Human Resource Management (M.A. in HRM) or the Master of Science in Management (M.S.M.) must complete a required, one-semester capstone course. M.A. in HRM students complete MBU 673 Master’s Capstone: Research, Synthesis, and Applications and M.S.M. students complete MBU 674 Master’s Capstone (M.S.M.): Research, Syntheses, and Applications. Prior to the Spring 2010 semester, M.A. in HRM and M.S.M. students enrolled in the same capstone course (i.e., MBU 673). MBU 674 was introduced for the M.S.M. students so that capstone curricula and projects could be more directly aligned with the enrollees’ course of study. Satisfactory performance (i.e., a grade of “B” or better) in these final courses serves to assess students’ ability to a) acquire an appreciation for, and gain experience in, applied research as a methodology, and b) apply research in the field of Human Resource Management or Management to a specific business/organizational situation.

The following tables detail the AY 2009-2010 pass rates for each of the graduate capstone courses. Note that, given the combined nature of the capstone prior to Spring 2010, Table 1 relays combined pass rates for the Summer 2009 and Fall 2009 semesters while Tables 2 and 3 parse MBU 673 and MBU 674 appropriately for the Spring 2010 semester. A total of 35 graduate students attempted and passed their respective capstone courses in AY 2009-2010.

Table 1: MBU 673 Master’s Capstone: Research, Synthesis, and Applications Pass Rates - M.A. in HRM and M.S.M. (AY 2009-2010 [Summer 2009 and Fall 2009])

| | Fail | | Pass | | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------|------|---------|-----------------|
| | N | % | N | % | |
| Graduate Program MBU 673 Capstone | 0 | 0.00% | 23 | 100.00% | 23 ¹ |

Table 2: MBU 673 Master’s Capstone: Research, Synthesis, and Applications Pass Rates - M.A. in HRM (AY 2009-2010 [Spring 2010])

| | Fail | | Pass | | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------|------|---------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | |
| Graduate Program MBU 673 Capstone | 0 | 0.00% | 6 | 100.00% | 6 |

Table 3: MBU 674 Master’s Capstone (M.S.M.): Research, Syntheses, and Applications Pass Rates - M.S.M. (AY 2009-2010 [Spring 2010])

| | Fail | | Pass | | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------|------|-------|------|---------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | |
| Graduate Program MBU 674 Capstone | 0 | 0.00% | 6 | 100.00% | 6 |

¹ Figure includes three (3) M.S.M. capstone completers – Fall 2009.

MBU 673/MBU 674 Master’s Applied Research Capstone Project

MSPS assesses learning outcomes for the two graduate programs via a rubric for the Capstone Research and Applications Project as prepared in MBU 673/MBU 674 Master’s Capstone: Research, Synthesis/es, and Applications. Given the value in examining learning outcomes by academic program, where possible, the following section reports findings by academic program.

In the Summer 2009 semester, 11 students completed MBU 673 Master’s Capstone: Research, Synthesis, and Applications and the embedded Capstone Project. All students were enrolled in the M.A. in HRM program. As indicated in Table 4, all students met or exceeded expectations with regard to scope, clarity, and development of their project topic while most students met or exceeded expectations with regard to knowledge synthesis and integration, written presentation, and oral presentation. These promising findings were tempered by the fact that slightly over half of all students (i.e., 55%) fell below expectations with regard to grammar, mechanics, and documentation. This outcome indicates that, while students are discipline/content savvy, they require consistent and intentional support to bolster writing and research skills.

Table 4: MBU 673 Applied Research Capstone Project Rubric Data – M.A. in HRM (AY 2009-2010 [Summer 2009])

| Trait | Level | | | | | | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|------|------|
| | Exceeding Expectations (3pts) | | Meeting Expectations (2pts) | | Below Expectations (1pt) | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1. Topic | 3 | 27% | 8 | 73% | 0 | 0% | 2.27 | 0.47 |
| 2. Critical Thinking & Reasoned Analysis | 3 | 27% | 4 | 36% | 4 | 36% | 1.91 | 0.83 |
| 3. Synthesis & Integration of Knowledge | 2 | 18% | 7 | 64% | 2 | 18% | 2.00 | 0.63 |
| 4. Structure & Organization | 2 | 18% | 5 | 45% | 4 | 36% | 1.82 | 0.75 |
| 5. Grammar, Mechanics, & Documentation | 1 | 9% | 4 | 36% | 6 | 55% | 1.55 | 0.69 |
| 6. Written Presentation | 2 | 18% | 7 | 64% | 2 | 18% | 2.00 | 0.63 |
| 7. Oral Presentation | 4 | 36% | 5 | 45% | 2 | 18% | 2.18 | 0.75 |

Total Projects Completed (i.e., N): 11

In the Fall 2009 semester, 12 students completed MBU 673 Master’s Capstone: Research, Synthesis, and Applications and the embedded Capstone Project with 9 students enrolled in the M.A. in HRM program and 3² in the M.S.M. program. As indicated in Table 5, all students met or exceeded expectations with regard to scope, clarity, and development of their project topics as well as structure and organization of the deliverable. In fact, the sample means indicate that most students met or exceeded expectations in all but two trait categories: a) grammar, mechanics, and documentation, and b) written presentation. Of these two categories, “grammar, mechanics, and documentation” represented the area of significant challenge: 67% of students fell below

² Given the small number of M.S.M. students, results have not been parsed out in an effort to protect identities.

expectations. While, in general, the findings for Fall 2009 are promising, writing and research skill remains an area of growth for MSPS graduate students.

Table 5: MBU 673 Applied Research Capstone Project Rubric Data – M.A. in HRM and M.S.M. (AY 2009-2010 [Fall 2009])

| Trait | Level | | | | | | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|------|--------------------------|-----|------|------|
| | Exceeding Expectations (3pts) | | Meeting Expectations (2pts) | | Below Expectations (1pt) | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1. Topic | 0 | 0% | 12 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 2.00 | 0.00 |
| 2. Critical Thinking & Reasoned Analysis | 6 | 50% | 4 | 33% | 2 | 17% | 2.33 | 0.78 |
| 3. Synthesis & Integration of Knowledge | 4 | 33% | 7 | 58% | 1 | 8% | 2.25 | 0.62 |
| 4. Structure & Organization | 2 | 17% | 10 | 83% | 0 | 0% | 2.17 | 0.39 |
| 5. Grammar, Mechanics, & Documentation | 0 | 0% | 4 | 33% | 8 | 67% | 1.33 | 0.49 |
| 6. Written Presentation | 0 | 0% | 6 | 50% | 6 | 50% | 1.50 | 0.52 |
| 7. Oral Presentation ³ | 1 | 13% | 7 | 88% | 0 | 0% | 2.13 | 0.35 |

Total Projects Completed (i.e., N): 12

In the Spring 2010 semester, 6 students in the M.A. in HRM program completed MBU 673 Master's Capstone: Research, Synthesis, and Applications and the embedded Capstone Project. As indicated in Table 6, all students met or exceeded expectations with regard to scope, clarity, and development of their project topic as well as oral presentation of the project. While the largest proportion (i.e., 67%) of students met or exceeded expectations with regard to knowledge synthesis and integration, structure, and written presentation, the largest proportion of students also fell below expectations with regard to critical thinking/reasoned analysis and grammar, mechanics, and documentation (50% and 67%, respectively). These findings are considered cautiously given the small N but, nonetheless, are indicative of the need for more substantial practice and support structures aimed at writing, research, and analytical skill development.

Table 6: MBU 673 Applied Research Capstone Project Rubric Data – M.A. in HRM (AY 2009-2010 [Spring 2010])

| Trait | Level | | | | | | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|------|--------------------------|-----|------|------|
| | Exceeding Expectations (3pts) | | Meeting Expectations (2pts) | | Below Expectations (1pt) | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1. Topic | 0 | 0% | 6 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 2.00 | 0.00 |
| 2. Critical Thinking & Reasoned Analysis | 1 | 17% | 2 | 33% | 3 | 50% | 1.67 | 0.82 |

³ Oral Presentation N=8 instead of 12 given that 4 students had to make alternate arrangements in fulfillment of the oral presentation requirement.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|------|------|
| 3. Synthesis & Integration of Knowledge | 1 | 17% | 3 | 50% | 2 | 33% | 1.83 | 0.75 |
| 4. Structure & Organization | 1 | 17% | 3 | 50% | 2 | 33% | 1.83 | 0.75 |
| 5. Grammar, Mechanics, & Documentation | 1 | 17% | 1 | 17% | 4 | 67% | 1.50 | 0.84 |
| 6. Written Presentation | 1 | 17% | 3 | 50% | 2 | 33% | 1.83 | 0.75 |
| 7. Oral Presentation | 2 | 33% | 4 | 67% | 0 | 0% | 2.33 | 0.52 |

Total Projects Completed (i.e., N): 6

In the Spring 2010 semester, 6 students in the M.S.M. program completed MBU 674 Master's Capstone (M.S.M.): Research, Syntheses, and Applications and the embedded Capstone Project. As indicated in Table 7, all students met or exceeded expectations with regard to scope, clarity, and development of their project topic and oral presentation of the project deliverable. The largest proportion of students (i.e., at least 67%) met or exceeded expectations with regard to critical thinking, structure and organization of project, grammar, and written presentation while 50% of students fell below expectations with regard to synthesis and integration of knowledge. Once again, while results must be considered in light of the modest N, the findings clearly show that students fell within average parameters for most traits but could benefit from support in learning to make meaning out of content.

Table 7: MBU 674 Applied Research Capstone Project Rubric Data – M.S.M. (AY 2009-2010 [Spring 2010])

| Trait | Level | | | | | | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|------|--------------------------|-----|------|------|
| | Exceeding Expectations (3pts) | | Meeting Expectations (2pts) | | Below Expectations (1pt) | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1. Topic | 0 | 0% | 6 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 2.00 | 0.00 |
| 2. Critical Thinking & Reasoned Analysis | 0 | 0% | 4 | 67% | 2 | 33% | 1.67 | 0.52 |
| 3. Synthesis & Integration of Knowledge | 1 | 17% | 2 | 33% | 3 | 50% | 1.67 | 0.82 |
| 4. Structure & Organization | 1 | 17% | 4 | 67% | 1 | 17% | 2.00 | 0.63 |
| 5. Grammar, Mechanics, & Documentation | 0 | 0% | 4 | 67% | 2 | 33% | 1.67 | 0.52 |
| 6. Written Presentation | 0 | 0% | 4 | 67% | 2 | 33% | 1.67 | 0.52 |
| 7. Oral Presentation | 0 | 0% | 6 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 2.00 | 0.00 |

Total Projects Completed (i.e., N): 6

Curricular Improvements

While the assessment findings for MBU 673/674's Applied Research Capstone Project indicate that student strengths range across traits, a review of lowest mean scores reveals that students do require additional support in developing writing skills. Specifically, students seemed to struggle

the most in grasping “grammar, mechanics, and documentation.” Therefore, more intentional writing experiences must be included in both graduate programs to ensure that students exit their programs with enhanced writing and researching capacities.

One substantial curricular improvement aimed at developing/enhancing writing and research skills involves the MSPS Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. In the Fall 2009 semester, MSPS began including two critical, gateway graduate courses in the WAC program. These two courses – MBU 501 Communicating Effectively as a Manager and MBU 530 Management of Human Resources – are required core courses in the M.A. in HRM and the M.S.M. programs. As part of the WAC initiative, graduate faculty are asked to assess syllabi and reframe assignments, exams, etc. with an eye toward promoting and fostering excellent writing and research practice (e.g., grammar, mechanics, documentation, structure, organization, and critical analysis). This “pipeline” approach is meant to develop students into stronger writers over the course of their programs so that capstone outcomes can better reflect holistic learning.

A second curricular improvement involves growing and varying the writing support services available to students. In tandem with intensifying its efforts to invite into the classroom/refer students to writing, research, and other academic support resources at CUA (e.g., library, CUA Writing Center, CUA Center for Academic Success, etc.), MSPS will continue to offer special, customized workshops that have long been part of MSPS’s student development programming model. These workshops will focus on enhancing good writing and research practices.

A third curricular improvement -- planned for Spring 2011 implementation -- is the required completion of an online “Academic Excellence” module designed for all new graduate (and undergraduate) students. The Academic Excellence module focuses on the key elements of paper-writing as well as the meaning and sources of appropriate, scholarly research. Additionally, the module walks students through a broader understanding of documentation, citation, etc. Students will be required to take (and complete with 100% success) an online quiz after reviewing the module -- in an effort to ensure that information is retained.

All of the curricular improvements discussed above – the WAC initiative, the supplemental academic support programming, and the Academic Excellence module – were/will be launched/developed in response to the needs of MSPS students. While the learning outcomes data indicate that MSPS graduate students in both the M.A. in HRM and M.S.M. programs have a solid understanding of the topic/discipline, a bit more support is required to ensure that degree completers are well-rounded practitioners and scholars.