

# The Evolving Role of Universities in Expanding Knowledge Among Local Elected Officials

Dale E. Thomson  
*University of Michigan-Dearborn*

## ABSTRACT

University public affairs programs have expanded their markets and impact on government by offering an array of nondegree educational programs to government officials. Local, elected legislators and executives represent one group targeted by such efforts. Serving this market niche offers both exciting opportunities and vexing challenges to universities seeking to improve local governance. Integrating data from three sources—a survey of training programs for local, elected officials in 23 states; a survey of local, elected legislators in southeast Michigan; and observations drawn while directing a university-based institute created to serve local, elected officials—this paper examines these opportunities and challenges and offers guidance for universities developing programs for these officials. The meta-analysis finds that a large number of programs have emerged to enhance the knowledge of local, elected officials on the fundamentals of local government, leadership, basic services, and professionalism. Universities play an increasingly prominent role in such programs, and there is room for continued growth. Expanded involvement by universities can lead to improved governance and provide universities with goodwill among important stakeholders, enhanced visibility, increased enrollment, internship and employment opportunities for students, and research opportunities for faculty. Such expansion should be premised upon an assessment of the university's financial, human resource, administrative, networking/organizational, technological, and leadership capacity for implementing such training programs.

---

Since the 1990s, public affairs educators have responded to local government officials' need for education and training programs by expanding the number of nondegree educational programs offered, most notably through certified public manager programs, leadership academies, and similar initiatives targeting local government managers (Killian & Vogelsang-Coombs, 2004; Paddock, 1996, 1997;

Rinehart & Smith, 1995; Slack, 1990a, 1990b; Van Wart, Holzer, & Kovacova, 1999; Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). Though professional associations were initially the dominant providers, universities have taken an increasingly prominent role in design, implementation, and support. As they expand their involvement in these programs, universities face many challenges. Securing operational support, ensuring adequate enrollment, and developing an appropriate curriculum are primary; yet, broader questions about the consistency between such programs and the role of universities are also evident. The priority of service versus research, theory versus application, knowledge creation versus information sharing, academic rigor versus simplicity, and service versus revenue generation are the subjects of debate in this area of service. These challenges are amplified for programs targeting elected officials, who often have the greatest need for knowledge expansion.

Using data from a survey of training programs in 23 states; a survey of local, elected legislators in southeast Michigan; and personal observations drawn from experience in directing a university-based educational program for local, elected officials, I discuss the prevalence of nondegree educational programs for local, elected legislators and executives as well as the primary opportunities and challenges universities face in serving this market. Three trends—universities' increased emphasis on demonstrating their practical relevance to elected officials, a growing emphasis on universities engaging with their host communities, and the growing number and complexity of local government responsibilities—provide great potential for these programs to serve critical needs of both universities and the broader community. Real challenges must be addressed in order to realize that potential.

I begin by describing the Institute for Local Government (IFLG) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (UMD) to establish an understanding of one model for university-based training programs for local, elected officials. I then share findings from the survey of 23 training programs to create an understanding of the range of nondegree training available to local, elected officials and of the role of universities in these programs. I supplement these findings with those of the elected officials survey and personal observations to address broad questions about the potential for universities to expand their involvement in serving the knowledge needs of local, elected officials.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The IFLG evolved from a series of conversations in 2003 between the UMD Vice Chancellor for Government Relations and representatives from various organizations involved with municipal governments and school boards throughout southeast Michigan. From these conversations emerged consensus around several issues critical to the region's future. First, local government was becoming increasingly important and complex. Second, collaboration

across jurisdictional boundaries had to increase if the region was to compete effectively. Third, the region's elected leaders in local government had great passion, conviction, and intelligence, but they needed more help to acquire the considerable, diverse, and unique knowledge and skills necessary to meet the region's governance challenges. Finally, the academic resources at UMD could be harnessed to address this need. Committed to increasing its positive impact on the Detroit metropolitan area, UMD embraced this opportunity and created IFLG.

From the beginning, IFLG has been a collaborative effort. Resources from the university were combined with financial assistance from a local foundation. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) was signed in early 2004, and, with the assistance of MASB, the Tri-County Alliance for Public Education, and other stakeholders, IFLG hosted its first symposium in March 2004. Over 100 participants gathered to discuss contemporary challenges and opportunities facing school board members. Over the next 20 months, IFLG held three evening seminar series modeled after existing MASB courses.

This successful collaboration was complemented by collaboration with organizations whose work focused on the operations of municipal government. Partners such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, and the Michigan Municipal League (MML) worked with IFLG to craft three seminar series for citizens who were considering running for office and for newly elected members of city and village councils. These seminars, which ran from April 2005 through February 2006, were well attended and generated considerable enthusiasm for IFLG. A July 2005 MOU formalized the partnership between IFLG and MML.

The MOUs authorize IFLG to offer classes created through MML's and MASB's existing training programs for elected officials. The MOUs commit each party to jointly market IFLG offerings and develop additional educational opportunities through IFLG. Participants in IFLG seminars are awarded continuing education units and credits in MML's and MASB's award programs for elected officials. IFLG pays a modest royalty to MML and MASB for each student participating in one of the courses originally developed by MML or MASB.

Initially, IFLG was primarily directed by the Vice Chancellor for Government Relations, with the assistance of two consultants who had served in elective office. This arrangement worked well until 2006, when the consultants left IFLG to run for office again. In fall 2006, the directorship of IFLG was turned over to a full-time, tenure-track UMD faculty member with experience as a research director at another university's research center, as well as experience in the field of local government.

IFLG's seminars are designed to address the policy, practice, and professionalism needs of local, elected officials. They include courses that are normally offered by MASB or MML in other parts of the state, as well as

seminars that IFLG develops using its own unique content. The standard format is a 3-hour interactive evening seminar, preceded by a light dinner to facilitate networking among participants. Occasionally, the institute offers a series of seminars on closely related topics, and participants are encouraged, but not mandated, to participate in all seminars that are part of the series. However, most of the seminars are stand-alone. This is largely driven by necessity, though the preexisting format of MML and MASB courses also plays a part. Local, elected officials are pressed for time and are more likely to commit to one-time seminars than a series of seminars. From its creation in 2004 through the end of 2008, IFLG provided training to 876 students (297 separate individuals) through its seminars and another 300 to 400 students through two special symposia. About 80% of those served through the seminars and 40% of symposia attendees were local, elected officials.

#### WHAT SPECIALIZED TRAINING IS AVAILABLE FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

Little data exists on the extent and type of training available for local, elected officials. Paddock's (1996) investigation of training programs is the only published multistate study of training programs for elected officials. It identified the general characteristics of training programs in 11 states and outlined basic considerations for structuring such programs. It serves as a useful baseline that must be updated with more recent and detailed data to gain an accurate understanding of the training that exists today. To better understand the nondegree training available to local, elected officials throughout the country and how IFLG compares to other models, in 2008 I surveyed training programs in 23 states, beginning with the 11 states included in Paddock's study. Given the focus on local officials, I included the 15 states with the largest number of local governments (10 were not in Paddock's study) according to the 2007 Census of Government. I added Georgia to the list because, although it was not among the top 15 states for number of local governments, it was among the top 15 states for largest number of municipal governments. I added Indiana as the 23<sup>rd</sup> state to include all states located in the Midwest.

Data collection included using a standardized search protocol to search the Internet for training offered by private companies, industry groups, professional/trade associations, municipal leagues, councils of government, and universities.<sup>1</sup> More than 90 phone interviews were conducted with all organizations that were found to have specialized training programs in which elected officials might participate (see Appendix for interview questions). As part of these interviews, IFLG research staff asked interviewees to identify other organizations that provided training in the state, to ensure that no organizations were missed in the Internet search.

The investigation focused on nondegree training programs offered on a consistent basis for local, elected legislators and executives. Only training

programs in which elected officials consistently accounted for a significant share of participants were included.<sup>2</sup> Training targeted to officials that are elected in some communities but not others, such as city clerks or treasurers, was excluded. Annual conferences hosted by municipal leagues and professional associations were also excluded.<sup>3</sup> Although much information is shared at these conferences through panel presentations and other offerings, the sessions tend to be short and not structured as formal training sessions. The fact that many associations offer training programs separate from their annual conferences further justified the exclusion of annual conferences from the analysis.

As shown in Table 1, some form of specialized training for local, elected officials exists in all of the study states.<sup>4</sup> The number of programs and classes varies significantly by state. Illinois, California, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin have 6 to 10 targeted programs; Arizona, Kansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota have 1 to 2. The modal number of programs is five. Yet, program counts can be deceiving. Some programs include many types of training classified under one label. Other programs identify each type of training separately. For example, one of North Carolina's programs entails several more classes and serves more elected officials than all programs combined in the other study states.

Table 1.  
*Training Programs for Local, Elected Officials by State*

State	Organization	Program	Newly elected*	Municipal			Township			County		
				Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other
AZ	League of Arizona Cities and Towns	Newly Elected Officials Academy	X	X								
CA	Institute for Local Government	Ethics (AB1234)				X						X
CA	California Latino Caucus Institute	Elected Officials Training Academy			X						X	
CA	League of California Cities	Mayors & Council Members Academy	X	X								
CA	League of California Cities	Mayors & Council Members Advanced Academy			X	X						
CA	League of California Cities	Mayors & Council Members Executive Forum			X	X						
CA	California State Association of Counties	Institute for Excellence in County Governance	X							X	X	X
CA	Contract Cities Association	Fall Training Seminar				X						
CO	Colorado Municipal League	Elected Officials Leadership Training Program	X	X	X	X						
CO	Denver Regional Council of Governments	Community Issues Workshops				X						X

Table 1.  
*Continued*

State	Organization	Program	Newly elected*	Municipal			Township			County		
				Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other
CO	University of Colorado at Denver Graduate School of Public Affairs	Rocky Mountain Program			X						X	
CO	Colorado State University - Colorado Institute for Public Policy	Bighorn Leadership Development Program			X						X	
FL	Florida State University - John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government	Institute for Elected Municipal Officials (IEMO)	X	X								
FL	Florida State University - John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government	Advanced Institute for Elected Municipal Officials (AIEMO)			X	X						
FL	Florida Association of Counties / Florida Counties Foundation	County Commissioners Voluntary Certification	X								X	
FL	Florida Association of Counties / Florida Counties Foundation	Advanced County Commissioner Education Program									X	X
FL	Leadership Florida	League of Mayors			X							
GA	University of Georgia - Carl Vinson Institute of Government	Newly Elected Municipal Officials Institute	X	X								
GA	University of Georgia - Carl Vinson Institute of Government	Harold F. Holtz Municipal Training for Elected Officials			X	X						
GA	University of Georgia - Carl Vinson Institute of Government	Newly Elected Commissioners Conference	X								X	
GA	University of Georgia - Carl Vinson Institute of Government	County Commissioners Training Program									X	X
GA	University of Georgia - Carl Vinson Institute of Government	Certified Commissioners Advanced Program (CCAP)									X	X
GA	Georgia Academy for Economic Development	Regional Leadership Training			X	X					X	X
IL	Illinois Municipal League	Newly Elected Officials Training Conference	X	X								
IL	University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs - Academy for Municipal Excellence	Leadership Enhancement And Development (LEAD)			X							
IL	University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs - Academy for Municipal Excellence	The Leadership Forum			X							
IL	University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs	United Counties Council of Illinois (UCCI) Leadership Academy									X	
IL	University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs	Township Officials of Illinois Leadership Academy						X				
IL	University of Illinois Extension	Institute for Excellence in County Governance	X								X	
IL	University of Illinois Extension	Certified County Officials program (CCO)									X	X
IL	Township Officials of Illinois	Newly Elected Officials Training	X				X					
IL	Township Officials of Illinois	Yearly Training for Township Officials						X				
IL	Northwest Municipal Council	Elected Officials Institute	X	X								

Table 1.  
*Continued*

State	Organization	Program	Newly elected*	Municipal			Township			County		
				Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other
IN	Indiana Association of Cities and Towns	Newly Elected Officials Training	X	X								
IN	Indiana Association of Cities and Towns	Mayors School	X	X								
IN	Indiana Association of Cities and Towns	Municipal Management Institute			X	X						
IN	Indiana Association of Cities and Towns	Mayors Institute				X						
IN	Association of Indiana Counties	DIPLOMA									X	X
IN	Association of Indiana Counties	Newly Elected Officials Seminar	X							X		
IA	Iowa State University - University Extension	Introduction to Planning & Zoning				X						
IA	Iowa State University - University Extension	Township Trustee and Clerk Orientation	X				X					
IA	Iowa League of Cities	Municipal Leadership Academy	X	X		X						
IA	Iowa State Association of Counties	New County Officials School	X							X		
IA	Iowa State Association of Counties	ISAC University									X	
KS	League of Kansas Municipalities	Municipal Leadership Academy	X	X		X						
KS	Kansas Association of Counties	Leadership Academy for County Commissioners	X							X	X	
MA	Massachusetts Municipal Association	Monthly Meetings				X						
MA	Massachusetts Municipal Association & Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association	Training for Council and Aldermen Leaders				X						
MA	Massachusetts Municipal Association & Massachusetts Selectmen's Association	New Selectmen's Training Seminar	X	X								
MA	Massachusetts Municipal Association & Northeastern University Center for Urban and Regional Policy	Municipal Leadership Academy			X							
MA	Harvard University Kennedy School of Government	Senior Executives in State and Local Government		X	X					X	X	
MI	Michigan Municipal League	Elected Officials Academy	X	X	X	X						
MI	Michigan Township Association	Township Governance Academy						X	X			
MI	Michigan Township Association	New Officials Training	X				X					
MI	Southeast Michigan Council of Governments	SEMCOG University - Local Elected Officials Workshops				X						X
MI	University of Michigan-Dearborn - Institute for Local Government	Elected Officials Training	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
MI	Michigan State University Extension - State and Local Government Program	New County Commissioners Workshops	X							X		
MI	Michigan State University Extension - State and Local Government Program	County Commissioners Workshops									X	X
MI	Michigan State University - Institute for Public Policy and Social Research	Michigan Political Leadership Program			X			X			X	
MN	League of Minnesota Cities	Leadership Conference for Newly Elected Officials	X	X								

Table 1.  
*Continued*

State	Organization	Program	Newly elected*	Municipal			Township			County			
				Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	
MN	League of Minnesota Cities	Leadership Conference for Experienced Officials				X							
MN	Minnesota Association of Townships - Minnesota Center for Small Communities	Spring & Summer Short Courses	X				X		X				
MN	Association of Minnesota Counties	Leadership Development Summit										X	
MN	Association of Minnesota Counties	County Government 101	X								X	X	
MO	Missouri Municipal League	Elected Officials Training Conference	X	X									
MO	St. Louis County Municipal League	Training Academy	X	X									
MO	Missouri Association of Counties & County Commissioners Association of Missouri	County Commissioner Training Conference										X	
MO	University of Missouri - Harry S. Truman School Institute of Public Policy	Academy for Leadership in Local Governance			X							X	
NE	Nebraska Association of County Officials	Institute for Excellence										X	
NE	Nebraska Association of County Officials	County Board Workshops & Budget Workshop										X	
NY	New York State Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials	Fall Training School for City & Village Officials				X							
NY	New York State Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials	New Officials Workshops	X	X									
NY	New York State Association of Counties	Dennis A. Pelletier County Government Institute Training Program										X	X
NY	New York State Association of Counties	Dennis A. Pelletier County Government Institute Training Program	X									X	
NY	New York University - Wagner Graduate School of Public Service	County Leadership Institute										X	
NC	University of North Carolina - School of Government	Local Elected Leaders Academy	X	X		X						X	X
NC	University of North Carolina - School of Government	Other Training			X	X						X	X
ND	North Dakota League of Cities	Biennial Legislative Workshop	X	X									
ND	North Dakota League of Cities	Municipal Government Academy				X							
ND	North Dakota Association of Counties - Institute of Local Government	County Officials Academy Commissioners Training	X									X	
ND	North Dakota Township Officers Association	Workshops							X				
OH	Ohio Municipal League	Newly Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Training Academy	X		X								
OH	Ohio Township Association	Leadership Academy						X	X				
OH	County Commissioners' Association of Ohio	Commissioners Training Seminar	X									X	

Table 1.  
*Continued*

State	Organization	Program	Newly elected*	Municipal			Township			County		
				Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other
OH	Cleveland State University - Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs	Leadership Academy			X			X			X	
OH	Kent State University - Center for Public Administration and Policy	Elected Officials Academy	X	X		X						
OH	Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce / Leadership Stark County	Stark County Local Government Leadership Academy			X	X		X	X		X	X
OH	Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce	Mahoning Valley Local Government Leadership Academy			X	X		X	X		X	X
OK	Oklahoma Municipal League	Newly Elected Officials Institutes (NOI)	X	X								
OK	Oklahoma State University Extension	County Training Program								X		X
PA	Pennsylvania League of Cities & Municipalities	Elected Officials Leadership Training Program		X	X	X						
PA	Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs	Training		X	X	X						
PA	State of Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors	Pennsylvania Leadership Institute						X				
PA	County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania	Academy for Excellence in County Government								X	X	X
PA	Local Government Academy	Newly Elected Officials Course	X	X								
PA	State of Pennsylvania - Governor's Center for Local Government Services	PA Local Government Training Partnership				X			X			X
SD	South Dakota Municipal League	Newly Elected Officials Workshop	X	X								
TX	Texas Municipal League	Newly Elected City Officials' Orientations	X	X								
TX	Texas Association of Counties	Leadership Foundation: Leadership Class									X	
TX	University of Texas - Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs	Seminar for Newly Elected Judges and Commissioners	X							X		
TX	Texas A&M Extension - VG Young Institute of County Government	Commissioners Court Leadership Academy									X	
TX	Texas A&M Extension - VG Young Institute of County Government	County Judges and Commissioners Continuing Education Training Conference										X
TX	Texas Leadership Institute (a program of the Lower Colorado River Authority)	Role of City & County Officials In Community & Economic Development				X						X
TX	Heart of Texas Council of Governments	Newly Elected Officials Workshop	X			X						
TX	Heart of Texas Council of Governments	Planning & Zoning Workshop		X								
TX	Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments	Newly Elected Officials Workshop	X	X								
WI	League of Wisconsin Municipalities	New Officials Workshops	X	X								
WI	League of Wisconsin Municipalities	Chief Executive Conference				X						
WI	Wisconsin Towns Association	Three Basics of Local Government						X				

Table 1.  
*Continued*

State	Organization	Program	Newly elected*	Municipal			Township			County		
				Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other	Fundamentals	Leadership	Other
WI	University of Wisconsin Extension - Local Government Center	Town Officials Workshops	X				X		X			
WI	University of Wisconsin Extension - Local Government Center	County Officials Workshops	X								X	
WI	University of Wisconsin Extension - Local Government Center	Fall Budget and Finance Workshops				X			X			

*\*Note.* Entire program or specific course(s) within the program target newly elected officials primarily.

The 112 programs seek to enhance the knowledge of elected officials in three areas—the fundamentals of local government and the role of elected leaders; leadership; and other areas of policy and services. Some programs provide training in more than one of these areas, though almost 70% focus exclusively on one (Table 2). Training on the fundamentals typically includes legal powers of different units of government, working effectively with others, responsibilities/roles of elected and appointed positions, finance basics, open meetings laws, and media/community relations. Leadership programs, which are slightly less common than fundamentals or “other” programs, usually cover conflict resolution, teamwork, leadership styles, ethics, decision making, group processes, and media/community relations. Training on specific services or policy areas, such as public safety, economic development, planning and zoning, or finance, is the most common type of training offered in the other category.<sup>5</sup>

Recognizing that the needs of elected officials differ as their experience grows, slightly more than 40% of the programs, and at least one in each state, target training to the unique needs of newly elected officials. In most of these cases, this is true of the entire program. In others, a specific set of courses within the overall program is targeted, while the remaining courses serve both newly elected and veteran officials. In all but two cases, the programs targeted to newly elected officials are fundamentals courses that serve as an orientation.

Most programs (83%) target their training to a specific type of local government—township, municipal, or county (Table 2). Though townships account for the majority of local governments, less than one fifth of the programs

Table 2.

*Characteristics of Training Programs for Local, Elected Officials*

	<b>Programs Covering Topic</b>	<b>Programs Covering Only This Topic</b>
<b>Topical Focus</b>		
- Fundamentals	46%	31%
- Leadership	42%	17%
- Other	49%	21%
<b>Target Audience</b>		
- Newly Elected	43%	34%
- Township	17%	11%
- Municipal	60%	43%
- County	46%	29%
	<b>% of All Programs</b>	<b>% of Programs that Reported Participation</b>
<b>Participation</b>		
- Not Reported	6%	—
- Less than 50	23%	25%
- 50 to 200	35%	37%
- 201 to 1,000	29%	30%
- More than 1,000	7%	8%

target township officials, likely because only 13 of the 23 study states have township governments. The largest share of programs is targeted to municipal elected officials, who generally have more formal powers and, consequently, more diverse training needs than either township or county officials. Township programs emphasize other training more than municipal and county programs. Leadership is a greater focus in county programs. The distribution of municipal programs by topic is more even.

The estimated total number of local, elected officials participating in training programs in these 23 states is about 24,000 to 29,000 per year.<sup>6</sup> Annual participation varies greatly by program—from 15 to more than 5,000. The modal number of participants is from 50 to 200 elected officials annually (Table

2).<sup>7</sup> About one fifth of programs train fewer than 50 participants, and about one third train more than 200. Leadership programs and programs targeted to county leaders tend to have fewer participants. Leadership programs tend to limit the number of participants to optimize the learning environment; they also tend to require a greater time commitment from participants. County programs serve fewer participants because counties have fewer elected officials, and leadership programs are more common for county programs.

The duration of training programs is generally short (Table 3). One day of workshops/seminars that run from 1 half-hour to several hours each is the most common format. Training on other topics tends to use a shorter format (5 hours or less) than either fundamentals or leadership programs. Most programs offer stand-alone courses, and many offer an integrated series of courses that spans as few as 2 days or as many as 2 years. Although it is not evident in the data presented in the table, leadership programs stand out in this latter category, with almost one fourth of them offering an integrated series of courses to cohorts of participants. Several of these are intensive programs that run 1 week or more and require participants to reside on-site during the training.

Table 3.

*Format of Training Programs for Local, Elected Officials*

---

	<b>Topical Focus</b>		
<b>Length of Training</b>	<i>Fundamentals</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Other</i>
- 5 hours or less	19%	32%	45%
- 8 hours or less	61%	70%	61%
- Multiday	29%	30%	39%

---

Leadership programs, more than fundamentals or other programs, embrace a philosophy that the optimal learning experience integrates a variety of related topics over an extended period of time in a collaborative environment among a stable group of participants. Jacobson and Warner's (2008) description of the University of North Carolina School of Government's Public Leadership Program highlighted the complexities and importance of such a design. Fundamentals programs usually take a survey approach and highlight key lessons from a range of topics related to serving in elective office. Other training programs typically provide intensive coverage of a single topic in a

stand-alone course, with advanced coverage for some topics (typically finance) available in subsequent stand-alone courses. Many programs that do not utilize an integrated course framework encourage officials' participation in multiple courses by offering certificates or awards to students who complete a specified curriculum or a minimum number of training hours or courses.

WHAT ROLE DO UNIVERSITIES PLAY IN TRAINING LOCAL, ELECTED OFFICIALS?

Municipal leagues, township associations, and associations of county commissioners or executives play a major role in training elected officials in all study states. These organizations are either the primary providers of training or play a significant role in developing or marketing programs offered through other organizations. However, universities also play an important role, one that has grown significantly since the mid-1990s (Table 4). The IFLG survey identified three forms of university involvement—university as lead institution, university as collaborator, and university as occasional participant. The models are distinguished by the role that the university plays in performing or coordinating administrative activities, designing the program and developing curriculum, and delivering courses.

Table 4.

*Role of Universities in Training Programs for Local, Elected Officials, by State*

Indiana	<p>Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs helped develop and run the Mayors Institutes. Professors from various schools serve as instructors for various training available through Indiana Association of Cities and Towns.</p> <p>Ivy Technical Community College has helped the Association of Indiana Counties run DIPLOMA, through facilities, faculty, distance-learning technology, and general guidance. It also offers a Certified County Official certificate to participants who fulfill certain requirements.</p>
Iowa	<p>University of Iowa's Institute of Public Affairs and Iowa State University provide many instructors for the Municipal Leadership Academy. They also help administer the program and share program revenue.</p> <p>Iowa State University Extension's Community &amp; Economic Development Program runs the Township Trustee and Clerk Orientation and the Intro to Planning and Zoning seminar.</p>
Kansas	<p>Various universities occasionally help develop courses for the Municipal Leadership Academy.</p> <p>Kansas University Public Management Center provides facilities and some faculty for instruction in the Leadership Academy for County Officials.</p>
Massachusetts	<p>Northeastern University Center for Urban and Regional Policy helps design and run the Municipal Leadership Academy.</p> <p>Harvard University Kennedy School of Government runs Senior Executives in State and Local Government.</p>
Michigan	<p>University of Michigan-Dearborn runs the Institute for Local Government.</p> <p>Michigan State University runs the Michigan Political Leadership Program.</p> <p>MSU Extension State and Local Government Program runs the workshops for new and veteran county commissioners.</p> <p>Universities occasionally provide facilities and instructors for SEMCOG University.</p>

Table 4.  
*Continued*

Minnesota	None identified.
Missouri	University of Missouri Harry S. Truman School Institute of Public Policy develops, administers, and provides instructors for the Academy for Leadership in Local Governance.
Nebraska	University of Nebraska's Extension Service handles the curriculum, instruction, and facilities and also does a good amount of marketing for the Leadership Institute.
New York	Cornell University offers credit for some of the Pelletier Institute's classes. It also helps identify instructors who assist with developing curriculum. Cornell instructors will soon work with the Pelletier Institute to provide white papers on current issues.  New York University Wagner School runs the County Leadership Institute, offered in cooperation with the National Association of Counties.
North Carolina	University of North Carolina's School of Government is the main provider of training for career, appointed, and elected officials throughout the state. Most training from government-related associations occurs through this program.
North Dakota	Universities occasionally provide instructors and facilities for the North Dakota League of Cities. Bismarck State College occasionally provides instructors for the County Officials Academy.
Ohio	Ohio State University Extension developed and manages the curriculum and content for the Local Government Leadership Academy offered by the Ohio Township Association, Toledo COC, Youngstown-Warren COC, and Canton Regional COC. OSU Extension also provides instructors for these programs, on an as needed basis.  Miami (Ohio) University Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs has a cooperative agreement with the Ohio Township Association to provide educational resources, including instructors and course materials for its Leadership Academy.  Cleveland State University runs its Leadership Academy. It also ran a Newly Elected Officials survey that was canceled in 2008 due to low enrollment.  Kent State University Center for Public Administration and Policy runs its Elected Officials Academy.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State University Extension runs the County Training Program in partnership with the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma.
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension, Albright College, and Westchester University sometimes provide facilities and faculty for the Association of Burroughs training.  The Iacocca Institute at Lehigh University partners with the Association of Township Supervisors for the Leadership Institute. It helps develop content, provides instructors, and serves as a host.  Pennsylvania State University faculty are involved on the board of CCA's Academy for Excellence. They offer some programming advice, faculty support, and curriculum direction, along with general guidance in fee structure.
South Dakota	None identified.
Texas	University of Texas LBJ School of Government cosponsors the Newly Elected Officials Training Program for county officials. It plays a lead role in developing the training and provides instructors. It also provides significant training for career local government professionals.  Texas A&M University Extension VG Young Institute of County Government runs the Commissioner's Court Leadership Academy and County Judges and Commissioners Continuing Education Training Conference. It also provides CEUs for the Texas Leadership Institute (TLI) and helps guide TLI's curriculum and programs.  Blinn College, Texas Lutheran University, Texas State University, University of Texas, and Prairieview A&M are also listed as sponsors of TLI.

Table 4.  
*Continued*

---

Wisconsin	UW Extension Service—Local Government Center plays a prominent role as the provider of training for Wisconsin Towns Association (except the 3 Basics seminars) and the Wisconsin Counties Association. It also partners with the League of Wisconsin Municipalities for the fall budget and finance workshops.
-----------	--

*Note.* “COC” stands for Chamber of Commerce. “CEU” stands for Continuing Education Units.

---

In the university as lead institution model, the university has the primary role in administering the program, developing the curriculum, and delivering courses. Under this model, the university provides core financial support, and courses are often held in university facilities. University faculty members often serve as instructors, but external experts may also be used. There are 35 university-led programs (31% of programs) operating in 14 of the states surveyed. Thirty-one percent of these programs operate through university extension programs; the rest operate through academic departments or independent centers or institutes.

University-led programs differ from other programs in important ways, most notably topical emphasis, format of training, and target audience (Table 5). They focus more on leadership, accounting for 40% of all leadership programs and 53% of those that focus exclusively on leadership. University-led programs tend to utilize a longer format (2 or more days), regardless of topic. They also target specific types of local government more frequently than other programs, and counties are more frequent targets.

On average, university-led programs train fewer elected officials than other programs, but there are notable exceptions. In three states, universities are the dominant providers of training for elected officials for all types of local government. These programs include the University of Georgia’s Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the University of North Carolina’s School of Government, and the University of Wisconsin Extension’s Local Government Center. Each of these programs has developed an array of training opportunities for career, appointed, and elected officials in local government. They train the most elected officials of any programs in their state, and the municipal, township, or county associations that typically provide the majority of training in most states run most of their training through, or in partnership with, these university-led organizations. In six other states, universities are the dominant provider of training for one type of local government. In Florida, the John Scott Dailey Institute of Government, administered by Florida State University and implemented in collaboration with five other state universities, dominates training for municipal

Table 5.  
*Characteristics of University-Led Training Programs for Local, Elected Officials*

	<b>Programs Covering Topic</b>	<b>Programs Covering Only This Topic</b>
<b>Topical Focus</b>		
- Fundamentals	40%	23%
- Leadership	54%	29%
- Other	46%	11%
<b>Target Audience</b>		
- Newly Elected	34%	23%
- Township	20%	9%
- Municipal	51%	23%
- County	66%	40%
	<b>% of All Programs</b>	<b>% of Programs that Reported Participation</b>
<b>Participation</b>		
- Not Reported	11%	—
- Less than 50	31%	35%
- 50 to 200	17%	19%
- 201 to 1,000	29%	32%
- More than 1,000	11%	13%

government. In Iowa, Iowa State University Extension dominates township training. Training for elected county officials in Illinois, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Texas is provided primarily by the extension offices of the University of Illinois, Michigan State University, Oklahoma State University, and Texas A&M University, respectively. The University of Texas's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs also provides a significant share of training for Texas county officials.

Partnership with municipal, township, or county associations is a critical aspect of all but three university-led programs. Even though universities take the lead role in these programs, the associations representing the units of government targeted by the training act as partners in marketing and/or developing the training, and they often also help with identifying instructors.

Universities play critical roles as collaborators in 16% of the programs. Though they are not the lead training providers, universities in this role help

develop curriculum, provide facilities or instructors, or perform administrative functions. Some universities provide modest financial support to these programs or offer credit hours to program participants. The extent of university participation in each collaboration varies, but it is ongoing and often formalized through an MOU or contract. The municipal, township, or county associations that typically run these programs retain primary control over them.

The university as occasional participant model, evident in 15% of programs, includes programs where universities provide instructors, classrooms, or curriculum input sporadically, but frequently enough that interviewees identified their participation as important.

#### COULD UNIVERSITIES PLAY A LARGER ROLE IN TRAINING LOCAL, ELECTED LEADERS?

Given the experiences of IFLG and the findings on the role of universities in the 23 states, it is worth asking whether or not universities could play a larger role in training local, elected officials. The following four questions seem most relevant to answering this question:

- Is there evidence of a need for more training opportunities?
- Can universities play a unique role in meeting that need?
- Can universities benefit from providing such training?
- Do universities have the capacity to play a greater role?

#### *Is There a Need for More Training Opportunities?*

Intuitively, there is a great need for training provided to local, elected officials. The chief executives and legislators in municipal and county governments across the United States are primarily part-time volunteers with no specialized education or training in public affairs. They juggle the demands of everyday life and work with the increasingly complicated and often fractious demands of a part-time position in elected office. When they enter office, many have great passion, sincere intentions, and knowledge of their chosen careers. However, their knowledge on matters of local governance often needs development. This includes understanding how their communities contribute to and are affected by broader trends impacting their regions; how various levels of government interface with one another; and the fundamental powers and responsibilities of local government and its elected leaders. Many do not fully appreciate the complexities of the need to develop new knowledge and skills until after they take the oath of office. Indeed, it is unrealistic to expect elected leaders to have mastered the skills and knowledge necessary for effective governance when they enter office, given the array of issues that they must address and the reality that most of their formalized education and experience has focused on their full-time professions outside of government. However, if this deficit in skills and knowledge is not addressed once leaders are elected, poor

governance and ineffective government can result. Society can ill afford such consequences.

The 23-state survey showed a significant amount of training available for both new and veteran elected officials. Still, many elected leaders are not receiving training. For example, in the five-county region of metropolitan Detroit, approximately 1,275 elected legislators and chief executives serve in 185 county, municipal, and township governments. The 2007 Census of Government indicates that there are 1,858 county, municipal, and town governments in Michigan. If the average number of elected officials per unit in southeast Michigan is applied to this statewide total, the number of elected legislators and chief executives jumps to about 12,800. An estimated 2,000 local, elected officials in Michigan participate in the existing targeted training programs annually. Surely, all local, elected leaders do not need training, but the percentage who do is likely higher than 17%. Participation in other states bolsters the claim of unmet need. Survey results suggest a maximum of about 29,000 elected officials receive training in years when elections are held; more than one third of these participants are newly elected officials. This equates to less than one elected official in each of the 29,492 local governments in the 23 states.<sup>8</sup>

It may be that most of the elected officials who do not participate in training have no need for it. To test this proposition, IFLG surveyed a random sample of the 1,937 elected legislators in the cities, villages, townships, and school districts of southeast Michigan.<sup>9</sup> The survey listed 122 different training topics (e.g., parliamentary procedure, creating and passing budgets, planning and zoning, etc.) and asked respondents to identify the extent to which they need additional knowledge or information on each topic. The majority of respondents identified a high or very high need for more information on 30% of those topics. The percentage of topics increases to 52 when we include all topics where at least 45% of respondents indicated a high or very high need. Clearly, a large number of local, elected leaders in southeast Michigan have a need for more knowledge on a variety of topics. Hattery's (2001) survey of New York's local, elected leaders also demonstrates a need for and interest in training. There is ample reason to believe similar need exists in other major metropolitan areas across the country.

Those with this need were not universally willing to commit to participating in training to address this knowledge gap. Still, there is strong support for training. For 38% of the topics, at least one third of respondents indicated that they would be likely to attend training if it were offered in the next 9 months. Percentages were as high as 52 for some topics. Eighty-five percent of all respondents indicated that ongoing training was important or very important to ensuring effective decision making by local, elected leaders. In IFLG's outreach experience, virtually every stakeholder, most of whom are elected officials, is highly receptive to the provision of targeted training within the region.

*Can Universities Play a Unique Role in Meeting this Need?*

Even if we accept that there is a need for more training for local, elected officials, what reasons do we have to believe that universities can play a unique role in meeting that need? The logic is straightforward. It begins with the fundamental characteristics of strong universities—excellence in research and teaching. The latter can enable universities to deliver training more effectively than groups who have not developed that expertise. Research produced by university faculty can provide unique learning opportunities for elected officials, thereby enhancing knowledge growth. Moreover, universities tend to have access to experts in a wide range of disciplines and, therefore, could easily address a range of topics in their training. When expert practitioners are needed, universities may be able to access their network of alumni (e.g., attorneys with expertise in land-use law, city managers, accountants with expertise in municipal finance, etc.) to serve as instructors or assist with curriculum design. A finding from our survey of elected officials supports the proposition that faculty expertise makes universities uniquely positioned to serve the needs of elected officials. Of the 20 training topics with the highest interest from elected officials, 15 focused on policy issues and only 5 focused on issues of practice or professionalism. Public affairs program faculty seems best suited for addressing policy issues.

Universities also have expertise in scheduling, registration, and other logistical aspects of training programs. They have facilities that are conducive to training and can often provide classes at low or no cost, an attractive feature for cost-conscious public servants. Universities can also serve as a neutral location for training, which can entice participants from different communities. Universities with reputations for learning may have an easier time marketing programs to attendees than nonacademic organizations. Finally, there is the intangible quality of the learning environment. As regional, state, and national focal points for higher education, universities' atmospheres tend to encourage people to arrive ready to learn (Leete & Maser, 2007).

Our experience suggests that these potential benefits of university-run programs are often difficult to realize. Our training seminars are held in a modern former corporate training center. However, though participants are favorably impressed with the facility once they attend training, few are attracted to training because of the facility. UMD has established a strong reputation throughout metropolitan Detroit for quality instruction, and our affiliation with an internationally renowned research university aids our marketing to officials in the region. However, the number of faculty devoted to public affairs programs on the UMD campus is relatively small, and the teaching loads and service obligations are high. This means that, compared to larger programs, there are fewer faculty that are experts in topic areas covered in our training, and those that we do have tend to face considerable time constraints that inhibit their participation in our classes. Moreover, as a campus that has historically placed a

heavy emphasis on teaching over research, the amount of research that has taken place and can readily be transferred to training classes is not as extensive as it would be in more research-oriented schools. This is beginning to change, but it is an evolutionary process.

Concerns related to faculty expertise, teaching loads, and access to research will be more critical for some campuses than others. A more universal concern is that elected officials tend to perceive a lower value in university involvement in training than do stakeholders within universities. In our survey of training programs, several respondents said that universities could play a unique role in enhancing the effectiveness of training programs, but many of these respondents could not identify specific roles. Others saw the potential value, but had no plans to pursue university involvement. More troubling, many respondents were pessimistic about the value of university involvement. Although many acknowledged potential teaching expertise, there was also a prevalent concern that university faculty were too “theoretical,” “academic,” or “ivory tower” to successfully address the learning needs of elected officials. Many respondents said participants want to learn from fellow elected officials or experts in the field and were less likely to pursue training provided by professors. This is consistent with Leete and Maser’s (2007) recommendation to use instructors with “street credibility” (p. 192) for legislative training programs.

Our survey of elected officials in southeast Michigan reinforces this observation. When asked how likely they would be to seek information from university-based research organizations, faculty, or extension services if they needed more information to make a decision on a particular issue, only 21% of elected officials said they were likely or very likely. This was the lowest rating, by far, for any of the potential sources of information identified in the survey. Most officials were far more likely to seek information from consultants, lawyers, government employees, other elected officials, stakeholder groups, professional associations, training, or the general public. Moreover, when presented with a list of 11 potential sources of information, only 10% of respondents included university-based research organizations, faculty, or extension services as 1 of the 3 most useful sources of objective information. On a more positive note, 39% of elected officials would like universities to play a greater role than they currently do in providing information to help officials make decisions. If universities take the right steps, elected officials might be more likely to use these institutions as sources of information.

Concerns about the ability of universities to meet elected officials’ training needs are real. Harvard’s Rappaport Institute, Indiana University Northwest’s Local Government Academy, and Iowa State University’s Governing Cities are university programs that have recently ceased operations. These closures are driven by various factors and should not be interpreted as evidence of dissatisfaction with the quality of services. However, the closures demonstrate that program survival is challenging even for universities with well-established reputations.

On the other hand, the 23-state survey showed some clear examples of successful university-based training programs for local, elected officials. This is particularly obvious where a university has become a dominant provider of training statewide for at least one type of local government. The programs in these states provide other universities with opportunities to learn how to capitalize on the value of university affiliation.

In the end, university affiliation probably doesn't harm a training program. However, there is little evidence that university affiliation provides a clear advantage to organizations trying to meet the knowledge needs of local, elected officials. Significant effort is necessary to realize the potential benefits of university affiliation and minimize the potential costs. Partnering with municipal, township, or county associations is one essential step.

### *Can Universities Benefit from Providing Such Training?*

Training programs for elected officials can provide several benefits to universities. The most important is improved governance in the communities where the programs and universities operate. Training programs can also create goodwill among elected officials who have authority over decisions that impact the university, demonstrate to policymakers and donors the practical relevance of the university, increase enrollment in for-credit programs, foster internship and employment opportunities for students, and enhance faculty access to research participants.

Although IFLG was created to improve governance capacity in the region, its creators also recognized that the program could build support for the university among local, elected officials. This could have long-term benefits, particularly in Michigan, where term limits for state legislators lead many local government officials to run for vacancies created when state legislators' terms expire. Support from these officials during debates over state appropriations and statutory or regulatory matters that affect the university is important. Even elected officials that do not participate in IFLG's training programs receive regular mailings from IFLG that provide an opportunity to market the university and increase awareness and potential support.

We also hope that enhanced university awareness among local, elected officials will lead to benefits for UMD's Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy programs. Many elected leaders have been exposed to the university for the first time through IFLG, and they leave with favorable impressions. Converting this goodwill into enrollment increase is an ongoing process. We continue to pursue opportunities to directly market our graduate public affairs programs to recipients of IFLG's marketing materials. Internship and other experiential learning opportunities are another spillover benefit. Students have been placed in internships with IFLG participants, and we receive unsolicited calls from participating communities that are seeking interns. IFLG

participants have also provided access to faculty seeking to conduct research in their communities.

IFLG provides an additional benefit to UMD. Near the time of IFLG's creation, the school's chancellor identified achieving metropolitan impact as one of the four strategic goals for the university. Enhancing local and regional leadership is one of the five major areas where the university seeks to have this metropolitan impact. The chancellor has identified IFLG as a core means for achieving impact in this area.

Some may wonder if universities can gain financially from creating training programs like IFLG. There is potential for such fiscal results, but the obstacles are great. Although the marginal cost of hosting a class is modest (presently \$425 in fixed costs and \$30 to \$45 per student in variable costs for IFLG), fiscal constraints among local governments and IFLG/UMD's partnership agreements with MML and MASB cap the tuition fees at \$70-80 per student for a 3-hour seminar. Classes are often cancelled when enrollment is insufficient to cover marginal costs, but sometimes classes run at a loss to ensure a sufficient number of class offerings each year. Some of these losses are offset by profits in other classes, but the long-term trend has been that annual marginal cost of classes exceeds the marginal revenue. When marketing and other overhead costs are factored in, the gap increases.

Many training programs for elected officials operate with a goal of breaking even on courses. Most of these programs charge relatively modest course fees—\$100 or less per day per course. For many of these programs, overhead costs are covered through membership dues, state appropriations, or external grants. For example, IFLG receives a modest, but essential, baseline budget from the state, and has relied on generous contributions from six corporate and foundation sponsors to cover the difference between course revenue and the cost of operating IFLG. The institute also relies upon in-kind support from the university in the form of staff support and office facilities. Some intensive university training programs charge tuition in the thousands of dollars. Even these programs often have corporate sponsorships to offset costs. Though some programs may generate net revenue, survey responses indicate that these are in the minority.

The cost of running a program like IFLG should be considered thoroughly before such a program is created. As with any new organization, administrative tasks and outreach will account for a considerable amount of time. Marketing will continue to be demanding throughout program operations. In spite of the receptivity among elected officials throughout the region, IFLG constantly faces a challenge of getting a sufficient number of elected officials to participate in classes. We have taken numerous steps to try to address this issue, including hosting seminars in the evening; making extensive use of e-mail and U.S. mail; teaming with reputable organizations for specific classes; and marketing courses through publications, conferences, and Web sites of MML and MASB. Since

its creation, IFLG has employed two external consultants, both city council members in local communities, to conduct outreach to other elected officials. The consultants make phone calls, write letters and e-mails, do presentations at city council meetings, and do face-to-face outreach at organizational or one-on-one meetings. All of this outreach, particularly the work of the consultants, comes at a considerable cost. And, unfortunately, the most effective outreach—that done by our consultants—is also the most expensive. Achieving high participation is not a challenge that is unique to IFLG. Several of the training providers in other states also indicated this is a challenge. The busy lives of elected officials leave little time for attending training, even when these officials believe it could be beneficial.

*Do Universities Have the Capacity to Play a Greater Role?*

The question that remains unanswered is whether or not universities have the capacity to play a greater role in meeting the training needs of local, elected officials. This question is difficult to answer without a school-by-school assessment. However, the information presented thus far and the general trend toward constrained resources for higher education provide some clues. Creating university-based programs to serve elected officials requires additional resources. Many schools may have more flexible resources than those that exist at UMD, but allocating resources to such programs will inevitably require sacrifices in other areas. This is especially problematic when such transfers are seen as depleting resources from traditional academic programs. On the other hand, the financial resources required to begin and operate a modest program are not excessive. A program such as IFLG's, even in an expanded format that serves 100-150 local, elected officials in a year, could operate effectively with \$150,000 in operating support. A modest baseline budget from the university combined with grant writing could provide this funding. Additional funding would enable IFLG to make important investments in activities and resources that would help ensure long-term sustainability.

Yet, funding alone is insufficient. Jacobson and Warner (2008) demonstrated that time demands on university faculty and staff can be significant, even within well-established programs. Personal experience and survey findings indicate that several nonfinancial dimensions of organizational capacity are critical to program success. Human resource systems that allow for flexibility in job assignments and incentives that encourage faculty to be active participants help programs tap into faculty expertise and enhance program buy-in among this critical stakeholder group. Administrative and networking/interorganizational capacity that enable universities to develop and maintain databases of elected officials; engage in ongoing outreach to elected officials; develop and manage alumni networks; and forge partnerships with municipal, county, town, school board, and other associations that have established

credibility among local, elected officials help achieve buy-in from and aid marketing to potential training clients. Technological capacity for determining when it is best to use a traditional academic, university-based model of course delivery—demanding, intensive, theory-driven courses over extended periods of time—and when it is best to use a less rigorous training-based model enhances program relevancy and participation. Capacity to sense the political, economic, and policy environment affecting local, elected officials and modify training to meet changing needs helps ensure program relevancy. Leadership capacity to commit to such initiatives during the challenges of program start-up helps programs survive during the years required to establish familiarity, credibility, and acceptability from the target audience.

## CONCLUSION

A large number of programs to improve the governance capacity of local, elected officials is available. These programs seek to enhance knowledge on the fundamentals of local government, leadership, basic services, and professionalism. Despite expansion of programs and participation since the early 1990s, there is considerable room for growth in the availability and reach of these programs in most states.

Universities play an increasingly important role in providing these training programs, particularly in the area of leadership development, and they have a unique opportunity to expand their role. There are many challenges to capitalizing on this opportunity. Some of these, such as striking a proper balance between core academic programs and specialized programs, as well as overcoming the ivory tower image among elected officials, are unique to universities. Yet, the most fundamental challenges—maintaining high levels of participation by elected officials and ensuring that critical resources for core programs are not unnecessarily diverted to training programs—are common to all organizations engaged in such training. It will be important for universities considering creation of training programs to critically assess their capacity to do so. This would include assessing the universities' abilities to provide base financial support and attract additional grants for operating costs, provide incentives to encourage faculty participation, integrate research into courses, forge partnerships with relevant professional associations, engage in ongoing outreach with elected officials, utilize nontraditional formats for delivering training, continually assess the political and policy environment for relevant training topics, and exert leadership to ensure long-term sustainability during the challenges of program start-up.

Where assessments are positive, allocating sufficient resources to make these programs a reality can help elected officials govern more effectively and provide universities with goodwill among important stakeholders, enhanced visibility, increased enrollment, internship and employment opportunities for students, and research opportunities for faculty. Where universities conclude that their

capacity to lead such programs is insufficient, they should consider whether or not they have the capacity to serve as a collaborator in existing training programs, and thereby accrue some of the benefits without incurring as many risks.

#### REFERENCES

- Hattery, M. (2001). 2000 survey of New York's local government leaders' policy issues, training needs, and technology use. Paper prepared for the Cornell Local Government Program.
- Jacobson, W. S., & Warner, D. (2008). Leading and governing: A model for local government education. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 14*(2), 149-173.
- Killian, J., & Vogelsang-Coombs, V. (2004). A model of outreach and partnership: Ohio's CPM program. Paper presented at the Teaching Public Administration Conference. Madison, WI, February 12-14.
- Leete, L., & Maser, S. (2007). Helping legislators legislate: An executive education program for state senators. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 13*(2), 187-204.
- Paddock, S. (1996). Training municipal elected officials: Current practice and a developmental model. *International Journal of Public Administration, 16*(5), 689-709.
- Paddock, S. (1997). Benchmarks in management training. *Public Personnel Management, 26*(4), 441-460.
- Rinehart, S. H., & Smith, K. L. (1995). Leadership and managerial skills of county commissioners. *Journal of Extension, 33*(1), n.p. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1995february/rb3.php>
- Slack, J. D. (1990a). Information, training, and assistance needs of municipal governments. *Public Administration Review, 50*(4), 450-457.
- Slack, J. D. (1990b). Local government training and education needs for the twenty-first century. *Public Productivity and Management Review, 13*(4), 397-404.
- Van Wart, M, Holzer, M., & Kovacova, A. (1999). The scope of public administration continuing education in universities: An exploratory study. *Public Productivity & Management Review, 23*(1), 68-82.
- Vogelsang-Coombs, V. (1997). Governance education: Helping city councils learn. *Public Administration Review, 57*(6), 490-500.
- Vogelsang-Coombs, V., & Miller, M. (1999). Developing the governance capacity of local elected officials. *Public Administration Review, 59*(3), 199-217.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 For each state, the research team searched for training information on the Web sites of the following statewide organizations: Municipal league, town or township association, city managers association, association of counties, and county managers association. We also browsed and searched Web sites of councils of government and chambers of commerce in each state. Web sites of all schools in each state that were listed on the NASPAA Web site as having public administration or public policy programs were searched, as were university extension service Web sites. Finally, Google searches were conducted using the following terms: “state name + leadership training” and “state name + elected training.”
- 2 This resulted in the exclusion of programs that were available, but not targeted, to elected officials, such as stand-alone workshops on special topics offered by councils of government or municipal leagues; recurring workshops related to certification programs, like those of the Government Finance Officers Association; and highly structured, multiyear university-based Certified Public Manager programs that were targeted to government officials. It also excluded leadership programs run by chambers of commerce in major metropolitan areas in most of the study states and targeted more broadly to regional leaders. Our interviews indicated that elected officials rarely participated in these programs in significant numbers.
- 3 We did include conferences that were specifically identified as training conferences during interviews that confirmed they met our criteria for inclusion.
- 4 The table only includes programs that were active at the time the research was conducted. It does not include programs that recently ceased operations. It also excludes two programs—Ball State University’s Indiana Communities Institute and Indiana University’s Mayor’s Institute—that had been created but had not yet hosted classes at the time the research was conducted.
- 5 The classification of programs by type of training depends upon how topics are bundled. For example, finance is included in the fundamentals category when it is offered in conjunction with the other fundamentals topics. It is included in the other category when it is offered as a stand-alone course that provides more depth of coverage.
- 6 The actual number is uncertain. Seven programs did not provide participation numbers, and many programs provided ranges, rather than precise numbers. Participation is much higher in election years than in off-cycle years.
- 7 These are unduplicated counts of participants. Each participant is counted only once, regardless of how many classes he/she participated in during the year.
- 8 It is important to note that some elected officials may be participating in training offered by national organizations, such as the National League of Cities’ Leadership Institute and the National Association of Counties’ County Leadership Institute, but this does not alter the result significantly. However, even if the 3,000 or so elected leaders that participate in these programs are factored in, a large gap still exists.
- 9 Eight hundred and forty-five legislators were randomly selected to participate. Mail surveys (with Internet option) were mailed in March 2008. Phone follow-ups to nonrespondents were conducted in June 2008; 290 responded (response rate = 34.3%).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author wishes to thank MPA student Harry Gaggos, whose research assistance proved invaluable for this project. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 2008 conference of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), October 15-18, 2008, Charleston, SC.

As an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, Dr. Thomson teaches courses in public administration and public policy. He is also Director of the Institute for Local Government, which trains local, elected officials on matters of policy, practice, and professionalism. Dr. Thomson's current research foci include community development policy; the knowledge needs of local, elected officials; and local government and nonprofit management.

APPENDIX

*Phone Survey of Training Providers*

**Programs Targeted to Local, Elected Officials**

- 1) I understand that (insert name of program or programs, if multiple targeted ones) target(s) local, elected officials as the main audience. Is this true? Do you offer any other training programs that primarily serve local, elected officials?
- 2) Can you tell me how many people participated in this/these targeted program(s) in the past year?
- 3) Were all of those participants local, elected officials? If not, how many were local, elected officials?
- 4) Is this an unduplicated count of participants? In other words, was each participant counted only once, even if he/she participated in more than one class during the year? (Note. Be sure to break out the elected and unelected, if relevant and possible.)
  - a) If no, do you have an unduplicated count?
  - b) If yes, do you have a duplicate count as well? If yes, what is it?
- 5) What time period is covered by the participation numbers you provided?
- 6) Do you have totals for earlier periods?
  - a) If yes, can you provide any of them to us? (If no to this question, go to 6b.)
  - b) If no, would you consider the participation numbers you provided to be significantly different from prior years? If yes, how so?
- 7) Have any school board members participated in your (insert name of program) classes? If yes, do you know how many?
- 8) What year did you first start offering classes through (insert name of program)?
- 9) How many classes did you offer last year through (insert name of program)?
- 10) Is that total similar to the number of classes offered in prior years? If not, how does it differ?
- 11) What topics do your classes in (insert name of program) cover?
- 12) Do the topics change much from year to year? If yes, please explain.
- 13) Do any of your classes or topics stand out as having higher participation than others?

If yes:

  - a) Which ones?

- b) Do you know why the participation is greater for these classes/topics?
- 14) Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the typical format of your classes in (insert name of program).
  - a) Are classes typically held during weekdays or weekends?
  - b) Are they offered during the workday or in the evening?
  - c) How long do they typically last?
  - d) Where are they typically held?
  - e) Do classes typically follow a lecture format, or is some other format used?
  - f) How much do your classes typically cost?
- 15) Do you find it difficult to get local, elected officials to participate in your classes?
- 16) Have you found any specific techniques useful for getting local, elected officials to participate?
- 17) Do you offer any credits, certificates, awards, or other official recognition to participants?
- 18) What are your primary sources of funding for (insert name of program)?

IF IT IS A UNIVERSITY-BASED PROGRAM:

- 19) Do you work with the state municipal league or any other partners in implementing (insert name of program)? If yes, what organizations are they, and what role do they play?
- 20) Do you provide any services besides training to local, elected officials? If yes, please explain.
- 21) What would you identify as the unique contribution that universities can make for training or otherwise improving the capacity of local, elected officials to govern effectively?

IF IT IS NOT A UNIVERSITY-BASED PROGRAM:

- 22) Do universities play any role in (insert name of program)?
- 23) Do you think that universities can play a unique role in training or otherwise helping to improve the capacity of local, elected officials to govern effectively?

After you have asked them about all the targeted training we have listed:

- 24) Do you offer any other training programs targeted to elected officials?
- 25) Are there any other organizations in the state that provide training targeted to elected officials?

## **Programs Not Targeted to Local, Elected Officials**

- 1) TRACK 1: IF YOU ALREADY ASKED THE ORGANIZATION ABOUT TARGETED PROGRAMS: Do local, elected officials participate in any of your training programs other than the ones we already discussed?

If yes:

- a) Which programs or classes?
- b) Can you tell me how many local, elected officials participated in those programs in the past year?

TRACK 2: IF YOU DID NOT ASK THE ORGANIZATION ABOUT TARGETED PROGRAMS: I understand that you offer several training classes for government officials. Can you tell me how many people participated in these classes in the past year?

- 2) Is this an unduplicated count of participants? In other words, was each participant counted only once, even if he/she participated in more than one class during the year?
  - a) If no, do you have an unduplicated count?
  - b) If yes, do you have a duplicate count as well? If yes, what is it?
- 3) What time period is covered by the participation numbers you provided?
- 4) Do you have totals for earlier periods?
  - a) If yes, can you provide any of them to us? (If no to this question, go to 5b.)
  - b) If no, would you consider the participation numbers you provided to be significantly different from prior years? If yes, how so?

- 5) TRACK 2 ONLY: Were any of the training participants local, elected officials?

If yes:

- a) How many? (If they don't have actual numbers, ask for an estimate)
- b) Were any of these participants school board members? If yes, how many?
- c) Are elected officials more likely to participate in certain types of classes?

- 6) TRACK 2 ONLY: Do you actively market your training to local, elected officials?

- 7) TRACK 2 ONLY: Are there any other organizations in the state that provide training targeted to elected officials?