Outcome-Driven Learning: Creating Opportunities for Change

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ABSTRACT
Through a case-study approach, Outcome-Driven Learning (ODL) is introduced as the first model to be grounded in the academic literatures of communication, action learning, and personal development, each of which has forged the understanding and teaching of public administration. This model is significant in that it defines success as a process where the teaching of public and nonprofit administration puts communication at the forefront of the learning experience in a way that allows students to articulate how they may become more effective citizens and better public service administrators. It is particularly suited to the teaching of administration through personal development because it uses communication to bridge the gap between the public and private aspects of service. Here, communication is the quintessential tool in promoting a balance between individual creativity and organizational constraint. Furthermore, through action learning, ODL enables students to attain a higher level of service learning where objectives are co-determined with organizational partners who strive to create meaningful outcomes.

Just as this year’s Teaching Public Administration conference addressed returning power to the people in administering government, this article also promotes personal empowerment. In particular, it introduces a specific model for teaching public service, entitled Outcome-Driven Learning (ODL), which passes responsibility for education back to students as they hone their knowledge of the field through “experiential exposure . . . to the world of practice” (Henry, Goodsell, Lynn, Stivers, & Wamsley, 2008, p. 122). Through a case-study approach, we illustrate how ODL fulfills the challenges expressed by the Task
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Force on Education for Excellence in the Master of Public Administration Degree of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA; Henry et al., 2008) and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA, 2010) to stimulate a dialogue between academics, students, and practitioners about how they can better inform and prepare future public servants through the development of learner-centered methods of instruction (e.g., internships, out-of-class projects, and conference presentations). ODL is the first model to be grounded in the academic literatures of communication, action learning, and personal development, each of which has forged the understanding and teaching of public administration. This model is significant in that it defines success as a process where the teaching of public and nonprofit administration puts communication at the forefront of the learning experience in a way that allows students to articulate how they may become more effective citizens and better public service administrators. It is particularly suited to the teaching of administration through personal development, because it uses communication to bridge the gap between the public and private aspects of service. Here, communication is the quintessential tool in promoting a balance between individual creativity (i.e., crafting multiple messages for diverse audiences) and organizational constraint (i.e., employing the financial limits of consistent information; Kimoto, Frasco, Mulder, & Juta, 2009). Furthermore, through action learning, ODL enables students to attain a higher level of service learning where objectives are co-determined with organizational partners who strive to create meaningful outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ODL uses an experiential pedagogy to engage students in a deep interaction with public and nonprofit fundamentals; this model adjusts the learner’s behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives to the requisite demands of service. It provides opportunities for students to confront the realities within their communities and introduces new expectations for generating student-based learning exercises. Consequently, ODL affects the traditional role of the instructor because the balance of power and the processes of assessment are no longer hierarchically driven. To clarify and demonstrate the value of ODL, we briefly explain the model before moving onto a discussion of why the rich academic literatures of communication, action learning, and personal development are critical in promoting the craft of public service (Kimoto, 2011).

As depicted in Figure 1, the ODL model breaks down the process of teaching public service into three elements: communication, action learning, and personal development. Together, these elements help advance the employability of students. For example, everything a service administrator does relies on the ability to use communication in creating stakeholder relationships and
articulating the practice of open and honest governance. Administrators function very much like lay teachers, who must determine ways of tailoring information that make sense for multiple audiences. Action learning complements the communication process because it is based on an ability to question past knowledge, listen to others, and implement solutions with actual consequences. It moves past role plays and case studies where students take responsibility for themselves and positions the instructor as mentor and guide. Personal development is regarded as a means of self-assessment where students seek out or create opportunities to demonstrate mastery of skills and provide clear justifications for their actions. Through the incorporation of ODL principles within public and nonprofit administration courses and projects, students refine their capabilities of generating measurable impacts for themselves, constituents, and communities.

Imperative in employing ODL is the assumption that service administrators employ communication as the catalyst for action in fulfilling their work as public servants alongside their role as private citizens. Whether in a leadership role, facilitating collaboration between organizations with vested interests, or developing strong assertive skills as a community advocate, effective messages...
can either lead to success or failure for individuals who are known by what they say (e.g., face-to-face and video), what they write (e.g., paper and e-mail), and the connections they cultivate both personally and publicly. When looking at the visual depiction of ODL, communication is the continuous thread or interconnection between the elements of ODL. Similarly, the literatures supporting action learning, personal development, and employability with impacts promote the advancement of communication.

Communication. 
Whether it be in the theoretical underpinnings of communication (e.g., trend and gaps, groupthink, innovation processes, etc.) or an application of specialized issues (e.g., boundary spanning, shared risk, public relations, etc.), Garnett and Kouzmin’s (1997) landmark book on administrative communication requires that the fields of public and nonprofit administration take notice of communication. In fact, some scholars, such as Denhardt (2001), have gone so far as to state that “administrators not only need to know about communications, they need to be able to communicate; they not only need to know about leadership, they need to be able to lead. They need to be able to ‘walk the talk’” (p. 529).

ODL builds on this heritage of recognition by defining communication as “a living process, reflective of one’s age, gender, socioeconomic status, education, culture, and tacit perceptions of right versus wrong” where every message or action conveys an impression (Kimoto, 2007, p. 38). It signals an individual’s readiness to respect differences, an eagerness to learn, and a willingness to accept that there are many ways of viewing the world while attaining viable solutions. The competency to communicate effectively is foundational for self-empowerment. Through communication, public servants allow others (a) to understand their values, inspiration, creativity, (b) to ensure a better future for themselves and for society at large, and (c) to avoid miscommunication and calamities in public/nonprofit administrative ventures.

Action learning. 
Drawing heavily on the principles of Revans (1983), Marquardt (2004), and Argyris (1985), the action learning element of the ODL model moves the students from the position of passive participants to active shapers of their educational experiences—framing learning challenges toward which each of them strives. In turn, teachers mentor and guide, rather than direct, their students toward building coalitions, values, and generating meaningful outcomes in personal development. Denhardt remarks that (2001) “learning is a process of sharing—and sharing goes both ways. . . . The point is that the teacher’s frame of reference, indeed the teacher’s basic psychological makeup, is very much involved in the process of education” (p. 528).
Extending the learner-centered approach even further, action learning asks students to solve real problems while also focusing on how their learning can benefit each group member, the group itself, and the organization as a whole (Kimoto, 2011). Through a series of questioning and listening, group members use reflection to resolve actual problems (Dilworth, 1998; Revans, 1983). The key for students as they transform themselves into public service administrators rests on functioning as facilitators who promote and encourage the group process between citizens, stakeholders, and clients, but do not dominate it (Kimoto, 2011). Therefore, action learning results in the delivery of change through the communicative efforts of group members who reflect the needs of multiple communities across stakeholder boundaries.

**Personal development.**

Under the personal development aspect of ODL, students contemplate principles and apply them to problematic situations. They learn from their own mistakes in a low-threat environment where they are encouraged to consider career objectives (see David Shenk, The Genius in All of Us, 2010) as they explore diverse cultures. As co-learners in the creation of public service, students offer multiple conceptualizations of issues, verbalize questions and answers, and do their own testing as community service agents. Basically, personal development may be considered as a form of intrapersonal communication whereby students reflect on how well they are preparing themselves for future public service and how additional coursework, skill development (e.g., information technology, geographic information systems, etc.), or professional growth (e.g., conference presentations, membership in specialized organizations, etc.) might enhance their advancement.

The impetus for personal development connects intricately to the role of communication. Just as the areas of interpersonal and group communication are addressed by the earlier components of ODL, personal development turns the focus of communication inward. Here,

To be reflective is to sit and think about what took place after it is completed; one’s role in it, others’ reactions and one’s responses to them. This can be done through thinking, writing, or speaking with another person. One goal of engaging in reflection is to learn from one’s experiences with the intention of improving the quality of one’s interactions with others in future encounters. (Nagata, 2004, p. 142)

**Employability With Impacts**

Raising the question of defining employability often pits employers against academics where each “still talks past each other and there are endless debates
about appropriate language” (Harvey, 2001, p. 107). Rather than contribute to this ongoing dispute, ODL acknowledges that success in applying this model is represented by students’ abilities to communicate their plans regarding the generation of community impacts.

As further testament to the importance of communication in identifying the capabilities of public servants, NASPAA (2011) referenced the 10 skills students should learn from their collegiate studies: (a) work ethic, (b) developing physical skills, (c) communicating verbally, (d) communicating in writing, (e) working directly with people, (f) influencing people, (g) gathering information, (h) using quantitative tools, (i) asking and answering the right questions, and (j) solving problems. Upon review, readers will notice how many of the proficiencies not only mention communication directly but also employ it indirectly as the medium of action (e.g., gathering information, solving problems, and working with people). The benefit of ODL occurs when students, teachers, and practitioners value public service as the ongoing process of action, reflection, and learning that is fueled through communication.

ODL realizes that individuals who enter the field of public service do so because they want to tackle the “wicked problems—the challenging issues that define the public agenda and call for talented individuals to devote their efforts to finding solutions” (ASPA, 2011). ODL contends that it is the process of moving through communication, action learning, and personal development that (a) allows these same individuals to navigate the treacherous and emotional path between public servant and private citizen and (b) enables them to find solutions and enact meaningful social change.

What distinguishes this field from other professions is that “the management of emotion as a job requirement is a fundamentally communicative accomplishment. It is in and through interaction that we express, repress, or manufacture emotion, in our workplaces and elsewhere” (Shuler & Sypher, 2000, p. 51). Therefore, raising the consciousness of public servants about the power of communication to navigate the challenges of administration is of paramount importance. (Kimoto, 2010, p. 32)

**Considerations when Employing Outcome-driven Learning**

This section articulates how each of the students, who approached Dr. Kimoto to co-create this model, personalizes the benefits derived from ODL while paying particular attention to which aspects most affected them (see Appendices A–C). This narrative approach is critical in demonstrating the
success of ODL because it documents where and how students and academics can collaborate in building a technique that benefits the public and nonprofit sectors. As students further refine their usage of the ODL process, they will be able to describe how self-reflection is paramount to their learning. The axioms of this model specify that student narratives are essential in replacing standard academic-driven explanations of theory into action, but that these narratives are also balanced by the challenges and caveats presented from a teacher’s perspective.

Each component of ODL is illustrated by the underlying theme of one student’s narrative. For example, Jackson’s statement (Appendix A) epitomizes the growth potential for students in communication, particularly at the undergraduate level. Frasco’s explanation (Appendix B) highlights the importance of action learning as well as the role of ODL in achieving employability with outcomes. Finally, Mulder’s account (Appendix C) documents the need for self-reflection as pivotal for those pursuing positions of public service.

Communication
As the thread running throughout ODL, communication is presented first as an individual’s readiness to respect differences, an eagerness to learn, and a willingness to accept that there are many ways of viewing the world while attaining viable solutions. In respect to action learning, communication improves “performance, promotes learning, and positions organizations to adapt better in turbulent times” (Dilworth, 1998, p. 28). Personal development considers communication as the medium that helps cultivate social values with the goal of realizing a better future for society at large (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Employability with impacts is characterized by students’ skills in professional discourse.

The most influential aspect, and the foundation for the other aspects, of ODL was communication, because it has led to numerous opportunities and granted me the privilege of building strong personal networks. Communication has two critical aspects: academic and professional. Academically, there has always been an open communication stream between myself and Dr. Kimoto. Whether it be late nights on the phone working through a proposal or the in-class dialogue that motivated and inspired me to use grant writing to supplement my schooling expenses, it is the in- and out-of-class communication which propels my learning. Communication is one of the greatest catalysts within public organizations which is why embracing this aspect has been so beneficial for my professional career. (quoted from Appendix A)
Action Learning

ODL asks students and academics alike to reconceive their roles in the educational process because “what occurs personally in the student/teacher relationship is every bit as powerful—in fact, probably more powerful—than the simple transmission of information from one to another” (Denhardt, 2001, p. 528). For ODL, “The underlying pedagogical concept must enable students to learn what they know, what they do not know, and how they can improve their learning” (Nygaard & Brammiong, 2008, pp. 408–409).

Perhaps my most rewarding action learning experience took place when I discussed entering the National Association of School of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) Public Policy Challenge with Dr. Kimoto. She encouraged me to enter and guided me to realize I had a worthy message to share. Faculty members embrace action learning when they are able to recognize potential and encourage students to extend beyond perceived capabilities without telling them how, but guiding them to determine their own path. (quoted from Appendix B)

Personal Development

Related to personal development are the lenses of intrapersonal communication and reflection. As public servants bridge the gap between the knowledge gained through expertise with that gained through experience, their communication serves as the instrument between administrator and stakeholder. The key in public service is to gain “the ability to be self-observant without being overly self-conscious or critical” (King & Zanetti, 2005, p. 127). As the students move toward their career endeavors, they will be asked to “act as an interpreter and facilitator” while “assisting others to articulate concerns, voice needs, and implement community-developed strategies for change” (King & Zanetti, 2005, p. xi).

The challenges for students associated with ODL are centered in the openness of the process. In the “real world” some public agencies still incorporate bureaucratic, top-down, managerial styles. These entrenched organizational principles are resistant to the participant inclusiveness central to action learning. That is not to say that students taught with the ODL system can’t adapt; they simply need to be aware of the horizontal communication and limited employee input of some well-established public agencies. This is where the self-reflective aspects of ODL come into play. Students need to make a self-appraisal of what value they put on personal inputs into the decision-making process and guide their career paths accordingly. (quoted from Appendix C)
Employability With Impacts

The final aspect of ODL simply states that the competence to seek gainful employment and make impacts in the communities wherein service administrators work and live relies upon “knowing what to do, having the right qualifications (knowledge and skills), being able to read the contextual ‘game’, the rules, norms, values, and to be able to enact and react in ways which are positively justified by one’s peers” (Nygaard & Bramming, 2008, p. 404). The benefits of ODL arise when individuals communicate with others to work alongside them.

Recognizing that ODL creates a positive environment for change does not guarantee outcomes of employability and success. Instructors may set the stage, but if the individual is unwilling to be an active participant or unmotivated to self-direct, the benefits of ODL are lost. It is the same in employment situations. When I submitted my application to the United States Navy review board, 1,300 applications were accepted for eighteen open billets. My application had to stand out. I had to be clear, concise and demonstrate I had the leadership capabilities and qualities the United States Navy needed in the fleet. Action learning opportunities validated the ability to take theoretical concepts and apply what I had learned. Professional development allowed me exhibit skills during the interview process. I continue the use of ODL in my active duty environment as I have identified a mentor for guidance and within the guidance have worked to outline clear goals and objectives. (quoted from Appendix B)

A Teacher’s Perspective

Upon a complete reading of the narratives in the Appendices, the reader will gain an understanding of the challenges when employing ODL from the students’ perspective. ODL asks more of students. By the same token, it asks more from teachers. ODL breaks down the traditional barrier between student and teacher. It does not negate the fact that the educator has greater expertise due to advanced knowledge and greater power associated with the status of the profession. What ODL challenges are the notions that (a) students and teachers cannot learn from one another, and (b) learning is not exciting. For example, the mere definition of mentoring means “to guide and lead by example.” Teachers have an opportunity to make measurable impacts in students’ lives by sharing the wealth of their knowledge. When a student grasps a concept and makes it come alive through application and example, it results in a sense of fulfillment for both. In turn, fulfillment ignites a momentum behind learning and creates a desire to find new means for fueling this enthusiasm.
To what degree and how should someone incorporate ODL into their teaching to see a positive result? There is no definitive answer. Taken to a higher level, ODL can become a way of life that directs a path toward continual learning. At a lower level, it can be incorporated into just one assignment and bolstered through the support of former students who mentor and tutor those in subsequent classes. To encourage others to experiment with applications of ODL, we offer the following levels as basic suggestions and to facilitate proficiencies in effective communication, both verbal and written.

**Level one.**

At level one, instructors are just beginning to flex their ODL muscles as they initiate changes in the wording of their syllabus. Rather than using tenuous phrases, such as “the goals for the course intend for students to acquire effective oral and written communication skills,” instructors might replace the wording with a declarative statement that “students who take the course hone effective verbal and written communication proficiencies, which are crucial in the practice of public service.” While the emphasis is small, it is focused on applying communication in the practice of service.

**Level two.**

The point of this stage is to employ ODL in just one assignment for a course. For example, students create a topical report in which they interview practitioners about how the abstract concepts of public and nonprofit administration discussed throughout the course (e.g., accounting, budgeting, personnel management, etc.) are employed in everyday interactions. Students learn how to generate interview questions, present themselves in professional environments, speak face-to-face with public/nonprofit officials, and evaluate the usefulness of the interviews in making the theoretical concepts come alive. In addition, they present their findings in a 12-page report. Now, this is an extensive assignment incorporating several elements of communication (e.g., decision making, working directly with people, influencing people, gathering information, etc.), but a student could focus on just one of these facets and still reinforce the practice of communication within the field of public service. Another facet that has been added to this assignment is the pairing of the written concepts with YouTube-type videos. Here, students search the Web or create their own videos to document what is most memorable and relevant as they develop their voice.

**Level three.**

ODL can influence not only one assignment, but an entire course. In framing my grant-writing course, I took the following information into
consideration. According to the Foundation Center (2009), grantmaking is a $46.5-billion business. Therefore, when teaching the subject to undergraduate students, it is vital that the course (a) increase students’ interactions with key management functions, (b) enable them to become “wise consumers” in terms of their personal volunteer involvement and civic commitment, and (c) promote a realization that sustainable systems involve an intricate relationship between writing grants, board relations, and fund development (Kimoto, 2011).

Keeping these factors in mind, the course is divided into grant-writing teams who work with actual nonprofits and governmental agencies to solicit grant monies. Furthermore, students generate an evaluation protocol for the input of their colleagues (i.e., personnel management) and have the right to fire any member of the group who does not fulfill their commitments. When students realized the importance of refining their communications within this course, the reality of becoming employable with impacts sets in. The content is demanding, but it mirrors the world of public service and the role of communication in its functioning.

**Level Four.**

Figuratively speaking, ODL can form the basis of one’s teaching philosophy, whereby teaching is no longer just a 9-to-5 job. To put it plainly, ODL becomes a way of life:

As we explore the possibilities for future endeavors in teaching social responsibility, the role of communication remains pivotal. Vigoda (2003) suggests that the main challenge in the coming years is “a new vitalized administrative generation that is interdisciplinary in nature and tightly bounded together with modern participatory democracy” (p. 18). However, these aspirations can only be attained if the field of public and nonprofit administration investigates the subtle taken-for-granted assumptions embedded within our communication patterns. Herein lays an untapped reservoir to develop, hear, and respect the cultural stories of others. Perhaps, it is not the questioning of what is seen or heard that promotes the learning process, but the time taken to still our own voices. (Kimoto, 2007, p. 44)

The real change when employing ODL occurs when the words that are typically used to discuss teaching and learning are replaced with words that question how individuals can become involved in making a difference. Once again, the impact of ODL returns to the role of communication in our daily lives and the power it bears in changing communities.
The initial construction of ODL was derived from student input, but based upon a solid foundation of literature pertinent to the teaching of administration. From that point, the model has progressed to a mode of teaching whereby success is determined as individuals are able to define and communicate their own paths to making change through public service. Subsequently, teachers must be willing to relinquish their control and serve as mentors so the real potential for learning can be actualized. When we can apply what we learn as well as communicate through various forms to those around us the impacts we have attained, we stress employment. Why is this important? Because those hiring public and nonprofit administration students want individuals who can think beyond the theory and textbooks and can apply that knowledge immediately. The current turbulent work environment compounds the need for students to transcend their comfort zones while thinking creatively. ODL uses communication, action-learning, and personal development to help students develop their own voice and solidify their long-term career objectives.

REFERENCES


Diane M. Kimoto earned her PhD from the University of Southern California with emphases in interpersonal and organizational communications. Her research and publishing interests combine communication and pedagogic theory toward identifying the underlying approaches that guide the co-operative experience between teachers and students in promoting excellence in learning.
Lorne Mulder has eight years of executive management experience leading behavioral health and international humanitarian relief agencies. He has a master's degree in public administration, with a nonprofit concentration, from Grand Valley State University. He is currently applying to PhD programs with hopes of eventually teaching at the collegiate level.

Jenny Frasco earned a Master in Business Administration from the University of Michigan–Flint (2010) and a Master of Public Administration from Grand Valley State University (2008). She is currently a Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps, United States Navy as a Health Care Administrator.

Cory Jackson is a fourth-year undergraduate student studying public and nonprofit administration with an emphasis in budgeting and finance at Grand Valley State University. He has led several service learning trips across the nation and continues to look for ways to enhance service learning in classrooms.

APPENDIX A

Cory Jackson Statement (Undergraduate Student)

Undergraduate students often enter college with an amorphous idea of what their future will hold. Some are drawn to one field and go through the common act of “switching majors” numerous times throughout their collegiate career. The Outcome-Driven Learning (ODL) model is welcoming to change, yet also has the ability to fuel passions and challenge students. I have embraced these challenges and have changed drastically since my first day of undergraduate classes. I have turned a typical college journey, into a hands-on, professional, and outcome-driven experience.

In the Fall of 2008, I first stepped onto campus. Fresh out of high school, I had little idea what I wanted out of my four years, but decided to take the medical route with the hope of eventually becoming a physician’s assistant. As I sat through lectures with throngs of fellow students, I soon realized I needed more from my time as an undergraduate. With the help of a service trip to Tennessee in my first semester, I found myself switching majors to Public and Nonprofit Administration.

I began my studies in the back row of Dr. Diane Kimoto’s course as a nervous, quiet, and directionless sophomore. Right from the beginning, I was
taken off guard by the amount of energy and student involvement presented in the class. As a Health Professions major, no one truly ever asked for the opinions of students or communicated in a way that fostered their engagement. Everything was black or white and gray was not acceptable. In Dr. Kimoto’s class, your opinion was not only requested, but embraced. It was this communicative aspect of her teaching that solidified my stance as a Public Administration major and ignited a passion which has led to numerous accomplishments within my prospective discipline.

The most influential aspect, and the foundation for the other aspects, of ODL was communication, because it has led to numerous opportunities and granted me the privilege of building strong personal networks. Communication has two critical aspects: academic and professional. Academically, there has always been an open communication stream between myself and Dr. Kimoto. Whether it be late nights on the phone working through a proposal or the in-class dialogue that motivated and inspired me to use grant writing to supplement my schooling expenses, it is the in- and out-of-class communication which propels my learning. Communication is one of the greatest catalysts within public organizations which is why embracing this aspect has been so beneficial for my professional career.

Through the communication in and out of class, I have experienced action-learning. Recently, I was sought by faculty members to help found a new program within our college with a mission of creating a more marketable undergraduate student upon graduation. Although it is collaboration between students and professors, faculty are there for support and to help with various red tape issues within the university; they do not make decisions for the group. It is this trust from faculty that fuels a learning environment which is genuinely student-led.

When it comes to how I have applied the skills acquired through ODL, I would place it on academic service learning. I have an extensive record of service learning experience ranging from individual days to week-long trips. With my knowledge of civic engagement coupled with the ODL model, I have begun to toy with the idea of incorporating academic-based volunteerism on campus. Essentially, students would participate in an alternative spring break trip (i.e., working with public/nonprofit groups to better local communities), but a curriculum would be built around their training and experiences. This not only enhances the educational aspect of service by making it more meaningful, but it also places credit on a transcript for putting time into a semester of engagement.

ODL is extremely applicable for undergraduate students. Unlike the characteristic teaching found in undergraduate classes (e.g., note- and test-taking only), this hands-on, communication-driven model brings out the best in students by challenging them to be better. The open flow of communication, the chances for personal development, and the action learning approach are attractive qualities to a undergraduate student, because it puts them in a situation where they feel as if their voice is being heard.
With anything, there are some obstacles that I can foresee when using ODL with undergraduates. The biggest challenge is the fact it demands a lot from students. It expects students to take on additional responsibilities that most undergraduates would not be asked to complete along with their part-time jobs, homework, and student groups. With that said, I also think if communication is implemented in an effective manner, students will not see these challenges as burdens, but as opportunities that will draw them in naturally to be a better student and professional.

Currently, I am in the process of finishing my fourth, and final, year at Grand Valley State University. It is remarkable to see the change from a directionless and lost freshman, to a senior that has graduate school offers, presentation experience, and a resume that reflects a diverse portfolio of public sector experiences. If it were not for ODL’s emphasis on communication, action learning, and personal development, I would not have found myself in such a marketable position during my last year of undergraduate studies.

APPENDIX B

Jenny Frasco Statement (MPA and MBA)

In our ever changing, fast-paced environment, we must be adept at delivering our message in multiple ways (e.g., written, verbal and visual) and in multiple venues (e.g., social media, publications, presentations and town halls). We are required to think critically and must be willing to think beyond traditional boundaries to accomplish our mission.

The Outcome Driven Learning (ODL) Model engages students in communication, action learning and personal development, providing a consummate skill set necessary to excel in the 21st century workforce. I have applied the skills gained from ODL, creating a seamless transition from public administration student to a working professional.

As a Naval officer, I recently received an appointment letter to conduct a preliminary inquiry into a potential violation of workplace and Naval policy. The inquiry required interviews and drafting statements of record. Using skills learned as a public administration student in an online class with discussion board debates; information was gathered, reviewed and written in a concise report with an appropriate recommendation supported by fact, not personal belief.

Students allowed a path of self-discovery through action learning will possess many of the desired qualities public, private and non-profit organizations seek from graduate students. Action learning was a catalyst for personal empowerment and developing confidence in my abilities. My most rewarding action learning experience took place when I discussed entering the National
Association of School of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) Public Policy Challenge with Dr. Kimoto. She encouraged me to enter and guided me to realize I had a worthy message to share. Faculty members embrace action learning when they are able to recognize potential and encourage students to extend beyond perceived capabilities without telling them how, but guiding them to determine their own path.

The policy challenge required participants to select a public policy problem, current topical issue or societal challenge and offer a solution in less than 60 seconds. Being passionate about the health of our military members, I wanted to create a video that addressed the challenges many of our warriors experienced getting care upon their return. I created, wrote, shot and edited a 60-second public service announcement. The physical process of creating the video was not difficult, it was ensuring the video captured the story I sought to tell in less than a minute. Being able to deliver a concise message using a multi-media approach is another essential skill public administration students should embrace in our world of social media.

The action-learning skills developed while creating the policy video have provided a strong basis for delivering clear and concise messages in the military environment. This year, I had the opportunity to coordinate our Command’s annual fundraising campaign for the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society. Using the same process in composing the public policy video, I took the most important concepts and developed a script, slide presentation, and email campaign with the greatest impact. Ten individuals came forward leading our team to exceed Command expectations for the campaign and setting a new Navy Marine Corps Relief fundraising record.

Action learning is not isolated from communication or professional development. For me, professional development retained action-learning aspects. The single most important aspect of empowerment came through opportunities for presenting at regional and national conferences. A presentation before an audience requires absolute confidence. Self-confidence feeds into a positive professional attitude.

Students with limited interviewing experience or those wanting to develop networking skills, presenting at regional and national conferences allows for initial impression development. Attire selection, posture, voice control and speech speed combined with concisely sharing the message to an audience are fundamental.

Public speaking, outside the confines of the classroom, creates an elevated performance level expectation. A student moves beyond presenting to a group of their peers but rather to a group of individuals with a stake in the presentation.

Seeking my direct commission, I underwent a rigorous interview process. I had to compose a motivational statement similar to an executive summary of a brief. I was required to attach a resume reflective of my potential, similar to building a presentation identifying key attributes. I had to partake in a luncheon interview where I was assessed not only on my appearance, but also on
social grace, reflective of composure in front of an audience. During telephone interviews, I had to ensure clarity and privacy of communication, mirroring the technical aspect of ensuring presentation materials can be shared with appropriate back up.

Recognizing that ODL creates a positive environment for change does not guarantee outcomes of employability and success. Instructors may set the stage, but if the individual is unwilling to be an active participant or unmotivated to self-direct, the benefits of ODL are lost. It is the same in employment situations. When I submitted my application to the United States Navy review board, 1,300 applications were accepted for eighteen open billets. My application had to stand out. I had to be clear, concise and demonstrate I had the leadership capabilities and qualities the United States Navy needed in the fleet. Action learning opportunities validated the ability to take theoretical concepts and apply what I had learned. Professional development allowed me exhibit skills during the interview process. I continue the use of ODL in my active duty environment as I have identified a mentor for guidance and within mentorship have worked to outline clear goals and objectives.

APPENDIX C

Lorne Mulder Statement (Future Doctoral Student)

I originally planned to attend law school, but due to my inability to secure accommodations on the admissions test, I scored poorly. I then contemplated another equally viable interest: becoming a college professor. In the winter of 2004, I began to pursue my master’s degree in public administration. After starting my graduate degree, I was introduced to Outcome-Driven Learning (ODL). This pedagogical approach accommodates my challenges by utilizing communication as the conduit for action learning, personal development, and employability with impacts.

After my first class with Dr. Kimoto, she invited students to investigate hospital communication. The thought of actual research paralleled my blossoming aspirations to pursue my doctorate. For our first task, the team evaluated hospital websites using nonprofit standards and recording qualitative data from site observations.

From our initial inquiries, the importance of clear communication became apparent. Hospitals communicate through their websites, staff, furnishings, and policies. Some messages are affirming, while others are not. For example, positive images are transmitted to main entrance visitors through elaborate furnishings and pleasant surroundings while an emergency room offers limited space, foreboding foyers, statements stipulating immediate payment, and an inattentive staff. A hospital’s financial viability depends on creating positive impressions for
donors. This “branding” process connects with my marketing background and helped me realize my value to employers in the public arena.

Action learning is another component of ODL. I took a grant writing class with Dr. Kimoto and partnered with a public agency in creating a full proposal. Through this class, students learn proposal writing, budgeting, program development, collaboration, evaluation, and resource development. These skills are vital in securing employment as today’s public servants. Without these competencies, grant writing would be daunting, but due to the partnership atmosphere, students are better prepared for public service.

The skills I acquired through the grant writing class prepared me for my first professional position as a homeless coalition coordinator. Three months after I started, I wrote a $715,000 Michigan State Housing Development Authority grant, which was funded. My knowledge of system creation, program development, and budgeting were instrumental in making this time-sensitive project a success. The distribution systems which I created for the project were even recognized by government representatives as an innovative way to maximize community impacts with limited financial resources.

Another key tenet of ODL, personal development, was achieved through conference presentations. Initially, our team had no experience with proposal submissions, effective presentations, publishing, or pedagogical norms. Through the submission process, we were taught how to present ideas in a succinct fashion and target our messages to various audiences. Dr. Kimoto later explained I would raise my likelihood of admission into a doctoral program by further conference presentations. I eventually presented at nine scholarly symposiums and met professors and department chairs from a wide array of programs. The long-term personal advantage was placing a face behind my doctoral applications. At conferences, I was able to interact with selection committee members prior to applying. I intend to submit my doctoral materials in the spring of 2012, two of these schools include faculty with whom I have already made personal connections.

I eventually became Dr. Kimoto’s graduate assistant which was a natural continuation of my doctoral pursuits. I was then given the opportunity to substitute teach. Through these initiations, my inclination towards teaching solidified into a career path of obtaining my Ph.D.

The adviser aspects of the ODL, which are both communication-driven and development-based, are the driving force when helping students transition to the workforce. Too often, university professors forget their initial career obstacles and how valuable their wisdom can be to new practitioners. The challenges for today’s public servants can be overwhelming. Without a peripheral sounding board for advice, new graduates may experience failure or burnout. The support I have received from Dr. Kimoto, as a confidant, has helped reduce my stress as a nonprofit leader and encouraged me to continue my progression towards a Ph.D.
The challenges for students associated with ODL are centered in the openness of the process. In the “real world” some public agencies still incorporate bureaucratic, top-down, managerial styles. These entrenched organizational principles are resistant to the participant inclusiveness central to action learning. That is not to say that students taught with the ODL system can’t adapt; they simply need to be aware of the horizontal communication and limited employee input of some well-established public agencies. This is where the self-reflective aspects of ODL come into play. Students need to make a self-appraisal of what value they put on personal inputs into the decision-making process and guide their career paths accordingly.

ODL practices facilitate a holistic growth in students who become more employable by honing their talents for public service and creating meaningful community impacts. Personally, ODL has helped solidify my interests in teaching. With the help of this methodology, I look forward to eventually joining the ranks of esteemed colleagues I have met.