

Using a Capstone Case Study to Assess Student Learning on NASPAA Competencies

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ABSTRACT

The 2009 NASPAA standards have the potential to fundamentally change the assessment systems used by graduate public affairs programs. These standards require programs to focus on creating systematic processes for assessing student learning on the five universal required competencies as well as on applicable mission-specific, required, or elective competencies. The assessment mechanisms that programs use in these processes typically involve direct and/or indirect assessment methods. We examine the use of a specific direct assessment technique, the capstone case study, and its utility in effectively measuring student learning on the universal competency “to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions.” We report the results of an analysis of research methods case studies in a large NASPAA-accredited MPA program. The analysis illustrates a practical approach to identifying areas of deficiency in student acquisition of the chosen universal required competency and taking steps to improve the program in those areas.

KEYWORDS

capstone, accreditation, assessment

The 2009 NASPAA standards fundamentally changed the face of assessment in graduate public affairs programs. Programs are now required to implement and sustain a systematic process for assessing student learning outcomes and their acquisition of the five universal required competencies. This assessment process consists of four primary tasks:

- (1) Defining the competency within the context of the program and its stated mission
- (2) Identifying and collecting information that will be used to assess student learning for this competency

- (3) Analyzing the collected assessment data
- (4) Making programmatic and/or curricular changes as a result of the analysis

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) guidelines now require that programs seeking accreditation must complete the entire assessment cycle just described for each of the universal required competencies and document this completion in their self-study.

In Fall Semester 2007, the Masters of Public Administration (MPA) Program at California

State University, Long Beach implemented a new system for assessing student learning on required outcomes. This system created a layered system of assessment that gave faculty members and students a variety of opportunities to assess student learning and the acquisition of the five universal required competencies. Part of this assessment system included the creation of a series of five case studies that students are required to complete in their PPA-697 Directed Research capstone course. These case studies cover the five core content areas in the MPA Program. This analysis examines student performance on the Research Methods case study and reports how the MPA Program has used this information to help complete the assessment cycle for one universal required competency.

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN GRADUATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS

NASPAA has long encouraged programs to develop assessment systems that fit the nature and character of the program. Indeed, assessment under the 2009 NASPAA standards is clearly mission based (Powell, Piskulich, & Saint-Germain, 2011). Even before the adoption of the 2009 NASPAA standards, many authors recognized the importance of maintaining the link between program mission and student learning assessment (Durant, 2002; Roberts & Pavlak, 2002; Williams, 2002). COPRA's self-study instructions now explicitly require that programs develop their assessment systems within the context of the program's mission (NASPAA, 2013).

Assessment systems are often as unique as the programs themselves, and programs have many options to choose from in fashioning their assessment systems. Capstone courses, comprehensive exams, standardized testing, student portfolios, and course-based assessments are all possible assessment mechanisms that programs may use in assessing student learning outcomes (Saint-Germain, 2008).

These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive, and programs tend to use a variety of mechanisms to achieve their assessment goals.

The selection of assessment mechanism is often associated with the purpose of the assessment. A review of self-studies from the 2011 accreditation cycle revealed that programs were much more likely to use course-based assessments to assess the third universal competency (to analyze, synthesize, think critically, and solve problems) than to assess the first competency, to lead and manage (Saint-Germain & Powell, 2012). Programs were much more likely to use the comprehensive examination to assess this first competency.

THE CSULB MPA ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

The California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) MPA Program uses a layered assessment system that emphasizes both formative and summative elements. The layered approach consists of a series of course-based and programmatic assessments (Table 1).

Course-based assessments are designed to measure student acquisition of competencies and course-based skills in each of the core (required) courses. These pre- and post-instructional assignments are designed to measure the skill sets of students upon entering and exiting each course. Students complete a pre-instructional assignment in each required course during the first three weeks of the semester and then a similar post-instructional assignment during the final three weeks of the semester. Students receive formative assessment on the pre-instructional assignment that alerts them to areas they should pay particular attention to during the course. Students retain these pre- and post-instructional assignments in their Student Learning Portfolio and reflect upon their learning at the end of the degree program. These bookend assignments provide the faculty with an indication of student growth in the primary knowledge and skills in each course. Faculty members prepare analyses of these assessments to share at subsequent faculty meetings. Specific course-based revisions can then be initiated based upon the results of these analyses.

In addition to the course-based assessments, the MPA Program uses program-level assess-

TABLE 1.
Crosswalk of Course- and Programmatic-Level Assessments of Universal Competencies

Universal Required Competencies					
Assessment Level	To Lead and Manage	To Participate in and Contribute to the Policy Process	To Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, and Solve Problems	To Articulate a Public Service Perspective	To Communicate and Interact Productively With a Diverse and Changing Workforce and Citizenry
Course Level	PPA-500 PPA-577 PPA-696 PPA-697	PPA-500 PPA-670 PPA-697	PPA-500 PPA-577 PPA-660 PPA-670 PPA-696 PPA-697	PPA-555 PPA-577 PPA-670 PPA-696 PPA-697	PPA-577 PPA-660 PPA-696 PPA-697
Program Level	Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessments Case Studies Portfolio				

ments. Programmatic assessment mechanisms include students’ Initial Skills Self-Assessment (completed in the PPA-500 Foundations course upon entry into the program) and Final Skills Self-Assessment (completed in the PPA-697 final Directed Research course), which also are included in their Student Learning Portfolio. However, the focus of this analysis is the case study program-level assessment.

Students complete a series of five case studies in their final PPA-697 Directed Research course. Because the case study method is used as an assessment in each of the five core discipline areas in the MPA Program, faculty often rely on published cases to save preparation time, rather than creating new cases from scratch (“Teaching With Case Studies,” 1994). The five core content areas are (a) PPA-555, Public Budgeting and Finance; (b) PPA-577, Human Resource Management; (c) PPA-660, Organization Theory, (d) PPA-670, Policy Analysis; and (e) PPA-696, Research Methods. The cases are changed annually in the Fall Semester to avoid student familiarity with the exact topics from year to year.

Resources such as the Electronic Hallway, from the University of Washington, are filled with case studies that can be used for this purpose (“Electronic Hallway,” n.d.). These case studies are student-centered activities based on topics that demonstrate theoretical concepts in an applied setting. The case studies depict real-life situations in the public sector where problems need to be solved (Davis & Wilcock, 2003). Some cases (such as the PPA-696 case study analyzed in this paper) are original creations. When preparing their case study assignments, students receive clear instructions on the requirements, such as whether they need to conduct additional outside research to develop their solutions. Students are also informed about the case study process in their core courses, and much of the information provided in these courses is focused on preparing effective solutions to the PPA-697 cases. Some instructors also prepare a set of questions to give students a general sense of the major issues to be discussed (“Teaching With Case Studies,” 1994).

The core content faculty member responsible for that course develops each case and scoring

TABLE 2.
MPA Program Definitions of Learning Outcomes Measured in PPA-696

	To Lead and Manage	To Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions	To Articulate and Apply a Public Service Perspective	To Communicate and Interact with a Diverse Workforce and Citizenry
Program Definition	Understand the importance of program evaluation and the use of professional and ethical judgment	Demonstrate competency in techniques of program evaluation; logic models; application of techniques; and critiques of program evaluation reports	Demonstrate the importance of program evaluation in public management	Demonstrate oral and written communication skills through program evaluation report and presentation

rubric (in consultations with other faculty who teach that course) to represent the competencies and skills that students are expected to acquire in the course. All core faculty members who teach in that area participate in the evaluation of the cases using the approved rubric.

Case studies for each core area are provided to students electronically via the university’s electronic learning management system, Blackboard. Students submit their case study analysis electronically via Blackboard. Submissions are permitted at any time until the first day of finals week each semester.

THE PPA-696 RESEARCH METHODS CASE STUDY

Our research focuses on the PPA-696 Research Methods case study analyses submitted by students who were enrolled in the Directed Research course in Spring Semester 2013 (the case appears in Appendix I). Due to the time constraints of preparing this paper for presentation, only 30 case study analyses—submitted between January 1, 2013, and April 15, 2013—are included. Over the course of a year, about 100 students would normally complete the case studies.

The PPA-696 Research Methods course contributes to four of the five universal required competencies: (a) Lead and manage; (b) analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions; (c) articulate and apply a public service perspective; and (d) communi-

cate and interact with a diverse workforce and citizenry. The program has defined the contribution of the PPA-696 course to these universal required competencies (Table 2).

The PPA-696 Research Methods cases are assessed for a variety of reasons; the most important is identifying specific components of the competencies where students do well and other components where students could do better. The scores students earned on the case study were compared to their course grades for PPA-696. As discussed later, there is a correlation between students’ course grade and their score for the case study. However, the case study analysis with the rubric allows faculty to pinpoint specific aspects of each competency where students are meeting performance expectations, as well as those aspects where performance could be improved. Therefore, the program assesses student performance for the purpose of programmatic and curricular changes.

Each student receives a numerical score (0–100) on the case study as well summative comments from faculty on their performance, in terms of the criteria used on the rubric. Students receive not only a score but also detailed feedback on how the score was determined. The case studies are included in the students’ portfolios, and they may use them to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they acquired in the MPA program.

For this analysis, two core faculty members evaluated each case to establish rater reliability and validity. The cases were assessed on the basis of the evaluation rubric in Appendix II. Each case was analyzed in terms of its ability to adequately assess the seven criteria listed in the rubric.

RESULTS

Two faculty members reviewed the sample of 30 case studies and assessed them using the 7-point rubric in Appendix II. The score (0 to 100) assigned to the case study for the Capstone PPA-697 course was also recorded. For the 28 students whose scores were available, the average score assigned for the capstone grade was 89.6, with a low of 78 and a high of 100. The breakdown was as follows:

- Grade of A (score 90 and above) = 18 (64% of students)
- Grade of B (score 80–89) = 9 (32% of students)
- Grade of C (score below 80) = 1 (4% of students)

Scores from all five completed case studies are averaged, and a course grade is assigned for PPA-697. Students are required to receive at least a B in the Capstone PPA-697 course to receive credit toward their MPA degree. Therefore, grades of C or below would be considered failing grades. In reviewing the scores assigned for the PPA-696 Research Methods case study, we found that only one student’s grade was be-

low acceptable. For those at an acceptable level, five students (approximately 18%) achieved a very high score of 95% or greater. The number of students graded at an acceptable level is very high, and the proportion of students who achieved at a very high level outweighs the proportion of students who achieved at a very low level. Considering the scores alone, most students appear to be mastering this competency.

However, when we compared the case study analyses by using the 7-point evaluation rubric, some deficiencies were apparent. The results of this evaluation are provided in Table 3.

The case study prompted students to develop an evaluation design that could assess the impact of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on traffic congestion and patterns.

The most obvious problem with most of the case studies was the definition of the relevant variables. Seventeen students were cited for issues with variable identification and measurement. These issues with defining variables encompassed a variety of problems. The most troubling issue was the inability to correctly define the independent and dependent variables. This is a very basic skill, and the analysis revealed that two students were not able to define these variables correctly. A second issue concerned the lack of detail in the operational definitions of variables. Seven students should have provided more details or better definitions of the variables. However, the problem cited

TABLE 3.
Student Performance on the PPA-696 Case Study Rubric

Rubric Criteria	Number Cited	Percent Cited
Evaluation Question	2	7
Definition of Variables	17	57
Evaluation Design	6	20
Sampling	6	20
Data Collection	2	7
Data Analysis	3	10
Evaluation Budget	1	3

most often was the lack of any control variables. The ability of a design to correctly isolate the impact of the HOV lanes program is predicated on identifying the appropriate control variables. This was a problem seen in eight students. Obviously, the lack of control variables seriously threatens the internal validity of the student's proposed evaluation design.

The next problem area was in evaluation design. This was an issue with six students. One student chose a clearly incorrect design. Another did not recognize that random assignment was not possible in this case. One student did not provide enough detail. The other three students did not address the need for a longitudinal aspect to the evaluation design.

The discussion of sampling designs was also found to be a problem with six of the case study analyses. Four students either had no specific sampling design or did not adequately define the design to be employed. One student did not adequately explain how the population was to be stratified. The final student ignored ethical implications of the proposed sampling plan. The other rubric criteria revealed problems in only a couple of case study analyses, and they did not provide enough evidence of a widespread problem needing to be addressed.

Scores on the PPA-696 case study analyses were also compared to the grades these students earned in the PPA-696 course. This comparison is reflected in Table 4. Although the preponderance of case study grades exceeded 90%, the modal categories for the comparison of case study

grades and course grades were as expected. The one student who earned a C (below 80%) on the case study also received a C in the PPA-696 course.

We also compared the case studies from on-campus students to those from distance learning students. The MPA Program operates a small distance learning program that consists of approximately 20 students. During this study, 10 students submitted PPA-696 case studies. Of these, nine received grades of 90% or above and only one received an evaluation below 90%. This result compares favorably to the on-campus students. Most (55%) of the on-campus students received grades above 90%, and 45% of the students received scores below that mark. Therefore, on the PPA-696 case study, distance learning students did perform better than their on-campus counterparts. The same faculty member(s) graded the on-campus and distance learning case studies, so there are no interrater reliability issues in this regard.

PROGRAMMATIC/CURRICULAR CHANGES IN RESPONSE TO THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The final step in the assessment cycle is "closing the loop." This step involves using the results of the assessment process to inform programmatic and/or curricular changes. It allows programs to respond to the need to continuously improve the program (as required in NASPAA Standard 1.3) as well as meet the requirements of NASPAA Standard 5.1.

A meeting of the Research Methods faculty was convened to review the assessment results.

TABLE 4.
Comparison of PPA-696 Course Grade and PPA-696 Case Study Grade

	Case Study Grade: 90% or above	Case Study Grade: 80-89%	Case Study Grade: Below 80%
Course Grade: A	15	7	0
Course Grade: B	2	3	0
Course Grade: C	0	0	1
Course Grade: D	0	0	0
Course Grade: F	0	0	0

The results were also shared with full-time faculty members at a regularly scheduled faculty meeting, where faculty members were encouraged to suggest ways of enhancing student learning outcomes (Aristigueta, Gomes, & Wood, Byrd & Associates, Inc., 2006; Huba & Freed, 1999). One specific change was proposed to the PPA-696 Research Methods course. This modification will require PPA-696 instructors to include more coverage of variable identification and definition within the course itself. More emphasis will be placed on this topic within the course, and instructors will incorporate examples and group work into class sessions to assist students in developing the variable identification and definition skills necessary to create valid and reliable program evaluation designs.

In addition, the variable identification and definition section of the evaluation design assignment within the Research Methods course will be strengthened. The weight assigned to this section will be expanded on the evaluation rubric for the assignment in the course.

The Research Methods faculty members approved these changes. They will be implemented beginning in Summer Session 2013. A random sample of evaluation designs from Summer Session course(s) will be collected and compared to evaluation designs produced in courses taught by the same instructors in Fall Semester 2012 and Spring Semester 2013 to determine if student identification and definition of variables improved after implementation of the changes in the course. By using this longitudinal evaluation, MPA faculty can examine student performance and changes over time, and use the outcome data to drive improvement of individual courses that are custom tailored to students' learning needs (Fitzpatrick & Miller-Stevens, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This analysis documented the use of a Research Methods case in a capstone course. The case study was used to measure student learning outcomes on the third NASPAA universal required competency (to analyze, synthesize, think critically, and solve problems). Although most students performed well, several areas of

deficiencies were identified in the analysis. These deficiencies will be remedied in the next iteration of the PPA-696 course in Summer Semester 2013.

Analysis of the PPA-696 case study is one step in the systematic assessment process used by the MPA Program. The program will replicate this analysis for each of the remaining four case studies in the capstone course to complete assessments cycles for all of the universal required competencies. These results will be combined with the course-based embedded assessments (pre- and post-instructional assignments) to create a comprehensive formative and summative assessment process.

It is clear that case studies can be an effective assessment tool, particularly when used as part of a capstone experience for students. However, case studies also present some challenges. One challenge of the case study approach is designing a case that permits multiple solutions that are all relevant to the content presented in the Research Methods course. A case must be general enough to permit multiple approaches, yet specific enough to measure students' acquisition and application of the core skills presented in the Research Methods course.

Another challenge of a case study approach is the need for revisions. Each year, faculty must prepare new cases that are both valid and reliable. This process requires faculty time and effort that are usually not compensated.

This study presented only one approach to using case studies in assessment. Assessment processes are clearly unique to individual programs and need to be tailored to meet the unique characteristics of these programs. The program described in this study has multiple faculty members who teach the Research Methods course. However, smaller programs may not have multiple faculty members teaching a given course and may need to use a more longitudinal design to measure the stability of these assessments over time.

Case studies such as the one we describe in this paper may be effective parts of assessment systems. However, programs need to decide

which assessment mechanisms work best for their respective programs. Fortunately, the 2009 Standards afford this type of flexibility for programs to develop assessment systems that work best for them.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David C. Powell is a professor of Public Policy and Administration. His research focuses on the areas of assessment and accreditation for graduate public affairs programs.

Michelle Saint-Germain is Professor Emerita of Public Policy and Administration at California Lutheran University. She remains active in research, publishing, and consulting concerning assessment, accreditation, and accountability for graduate programs. She teaches in the fall semesters and indulges in her love of bicycling, travel, and watercolor painting the rest of the year.

Linda-Marie Sundstrom is an assistant professor in the Masters of Public Policy & Administration program at California Lutheran University. She was a Fulbright Scholar in 2010; she taught in the Masters of Public Administration Program under the Office of the President of Ukraine. She worked for more than a decade in the executive office of one of the largest counties in California and was a grant-writing consultant for educational institutions, nonprofits, government agencies, and tribal governments. Her recent research focuses on i-government (the interaction of smartphones and government agencies), along with nonprofit accountability and volunteerism.

APPENDIX I

“Life in the Fast Lane”—PPA-696 Case Study

Prologue

The City of Big Lakes inaugurated two HOV lanes eight months ago. It is now October, 2012 and the council directs the City Manager to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the HOV lanes. The City Manager contacts the City Traffic Engineer and instructs him to analyze

the effectiveness of the HOV program. The City Engineer contracts with the company you work for—Public Alternatives for Tomorrow (P.A.T.) to conduct a program evaluation. As the Project Director for Region 2 (which includes Big Lakes), you receive the following memo:

Public Alternatives for Tomorrow
1295 E. Brown Street
Washataw, California 90000

Date: October 1, 2012

To: L.B. Student, Program Director Region 2

From: Ms. Alexandra King, V.P. Operations

Re: Evaluation of HOV Lanes Program for Big Lakes (Contract #10075)

As you know, Big Lakes has contracted with PAT for a program evaluation of the HOV program that it implemented in February. The council is interested in seeing how the program has affected traffic and needs the results by January, 2013. The council wants to see a design for the program evaluation within two weeks. The design needs to include the following:

- The research question(s) for the design
- The variables that will be used
- The research design that will be used
- The sampling design that will be used
- How the data will be collected
- How the data will be analyzed
- A preliminary budget for the evaluation

The contract allows us to spend \$120,000 on the evaluation. Submit your evaluation design to my office no later than October 14th. Thanks!

Cc: Dr. R.U. Wong, City Manager

Background

The City of Big Lakes The City of Big Lakes, South California, is the second largest metropolitan area in the Northeast corner of the state. It has a population of 235,000 residents and is surrounded by four smaller communities. These smaller communities comprise the primary suburban belt that surrounds Big Lakes to the south, east and west. The combined population of these four smaller communities is approximately 150,000 residents. The combined total population of Big Lakes and these surrounding communities is 385,000.

Big Lakes is bordered to the north by Lake Lebron and its sister lake, Lake Wade. These are the northernmost cities in South California. Just to the north of Lakes Lebron and Wade lies Rileyville, a city of 320,000 in North California with a large technology sector. Rileyville and Big Lakes are often referred to as the “Sisters of the Lakes” given their close proximity to each other. (Please see the map at the end of this case.)

Big Lakes was founded in 1893 as a mining town. When the mines closed during the Great Depression, the miners turned to steel and factories began to spring up on the riverbanks. The steel industry flourished from the 1940s to 1960s but fell on hard times when it had to start competing with the Japanese steel industry in the 1980s. Then-City Manager James Brown embarked on an aggressive campaign to form partnerships with technology firms in Rileyville. As Rileyville began to grow in the 1980s and 1990s, these partnerships became fruitful for Big Lakes and its steel fabricating industry grew to meet the needs of Rileyville. A brisk trade grew between the two cities and Big Lakes enjoyed an industrial renaissance.

City Finances

While the State of South California has experienced a dire fiscal crisis over the past decade, Big Lakes has weathered the current financial crisis quite well due primarily to its agreements with Rileyville and Rileyville industries. The city’s commercial/industrial base is strong and its property tax base has actually grown as

property values have increased. The primary industrial area of the city has benefited from an aggressive tax increment financing plan (TIF) that has resulted in a revitalization of the area. Sales tax transactions have increased steadily over the last ten years and the city has maintained a healthy ending balance after each fiscal year with very low levels of debt.

While the financial picture has brightened, the city has lost many upper income residents to the suburbs. These former residents may live outside of the city limits but many of them still work in Big Lakes.

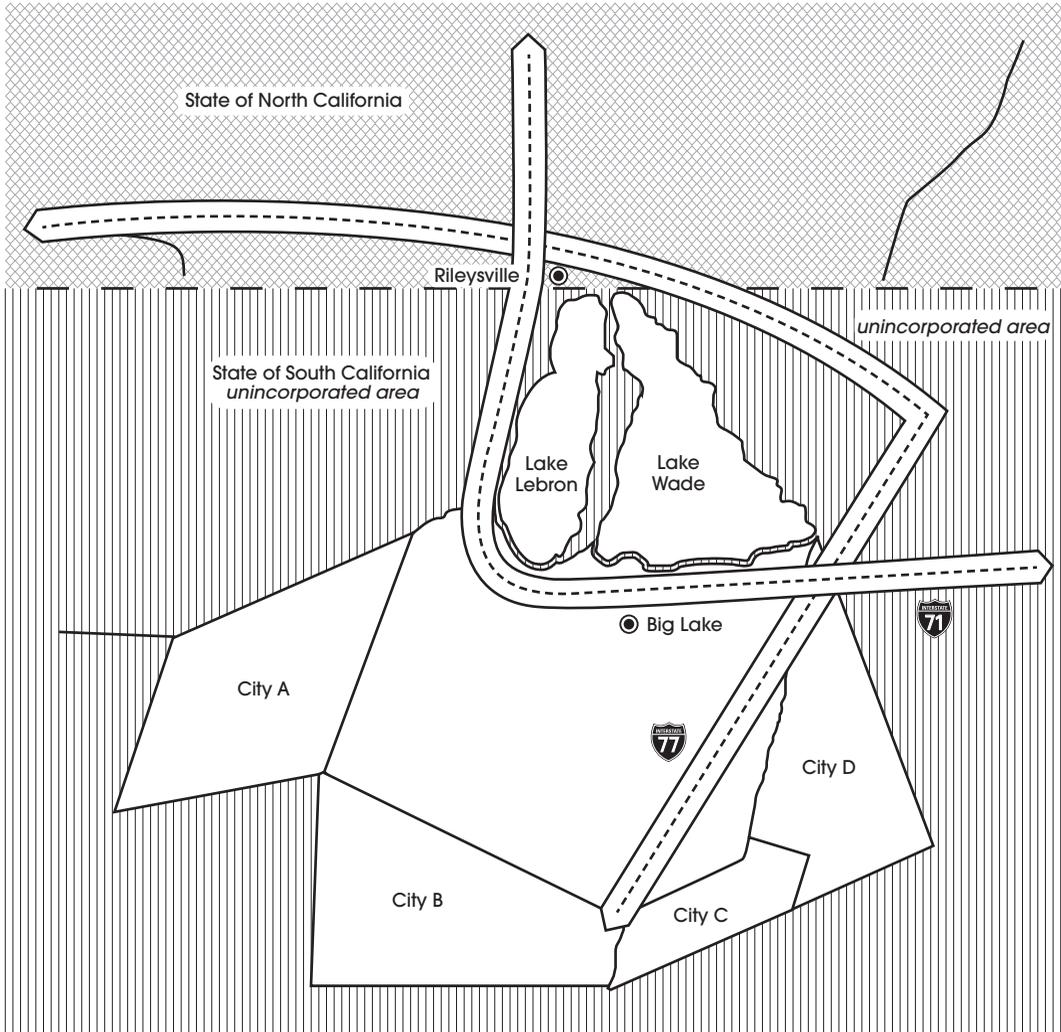
City Government

Big Lakes is a reform city with a City Manager and a weak mayor form of government. The five city council members have all served at least ten years on the council but elections have become much more competitive and the last round of council elections was very contentious. Councilmembers Sipe, Newsome and Brennan all won reelection but all won with a bare majority (51–52%) of the vote. The other two incumbents (Councilmembers Rutigliano and Cochroft) are running for reelection next year and face stiff competition for their seats.

The “Driving” Force in Big Lakes

Big Laker (as the residents of Big Lakes are known) and the suburbanites who live around Big Lakes would make Henry Ford proud with their love of cars. They drive almost everywhere! Average commute times from the suburbs to downtown Big Lakes have grown significantly over the past ten years. The same commute that took 15 minutes in 2001 now takes nearly 40. Most of the surface streets were built decades ago and were designed to accommodate a population of 100,000, far short of the 235,000 residents who live in the city today. There are two major interstates that connect the suburbs with downtown (Interstate 71 and Interstate 77). These are both four lane highways.

The city’s traffic engineer has conducted three traffic studies on all major surface streets as well as the two highways over the past 18 months.



The prime congestion times are between 8 am and 10 am and 4 pm and 7 pm Monday through Friday. While the city has considered major renovations to add an additional one to two lanes to each highway, the costs of that type of project are prohibitive. The state no longer has transportation funds to give to counties and cities for this type of construction. Since the state lacks the funds to match federal grants, the federal transportation spigot has been turned off as well. In short, the city is on its own to solve its traffic problems.

The Council Takes Action!

The usually gentle city council meetings have now become contentious. Hundreds of citizens

now show up to meetings and consume nearly two hours during the open comments at the beginning of meetings. Over 90% of public comments are about traffic and it has become clear that something needs to be done. This is especially clear for the two city council members who are running for reelection next year.

At the February, 2012 meeting, Councilmember Cochroft introduced legislation to seek a waiver from the state to transform one lane each on Interstate 71 and Interstate 77 into a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane. The motion passed with a 3–2 vote. Unlike its neighboring state of California, South California has very little experience with HOV

lanes so the council had little hope that its waiver would be granted. However, two weeks later, the City Manager received word that the waiver had been granted and the city could designate one lane on each highway as an HOV lane.

Back to the Future

It is now October, 2012 and the HOV lanes have been active for nearly eight months. The council directs the City Manager to conduct an

evaluation of the effectiveness of the HOV lanes. The City Manager contacts the City Traffic Engineer and instructs him to analyze the effectiveness of the HOV program. The City Engineer contracts with the company you work for—Public Alternatives for Tomorrow (P.A.T.) to conduct a program evaluation. As the Project Director for Region 2 (which includes Big Lakes), you need to create an evaluation design that adheres to the requirements in the aforementioned memo.

APPENDIX II

Evaluation Rubric for PPA-696 Case Study Analysis

Criteria	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Evaluation Question (10%)	The question is unclear and unanswerable.	The question is clear but may not be answerable with this type of design.	The question is clear and answerable.	The question is specific, clear and answerable. The question is of great importance for public policy and administration.
Variable Definition (20%)	The variables are not measurable.	The variables are measurable.	The variables are measurable and the definitions are appropriate.	The variables are measurable, clear, and specific. The definitions are comprehensive indicators of the variable.
Evaluation Design (15%)	The design is not appropriate for the research.	The design is appropriate but the justification for the design is not sufficient.	The design is appropriate and the justification for the design is sufficient.	The design is appropriate and the justification for the choice of the design is comprehensive.
Sampling Design (15%)	The sampling design is not appropriate.	The sampling design is appropriate but the justification is not sufficient.	The sampling design is appropriate and the justification for the design is sufficient.	The sampling design is appropriate and the justification for the choice of the design is comprehensive.
Data Collection (15%)	The data collection mechanism is not appropriate for the design.	The data collection mechanism is appropriate but the justification is lacking.	The data collection mechanism is appropriate and the justification is sufficient.	The data collection mechanism is clearly the best to use in this situation and the justification is comprehensive.
Data Analysis (15%)	The data analysis approach is not appropriate.	The data analysis is appropriate for the descriptive aspect of the study.	The data analysis is appropriate for all aspects of the study.	The data analysis is appropriate for all aspects of the study and the justification is comprehensive.
Evaluation Budget (10%)	The budget is unrealistic and does not cover the necessary components for the design.	The budget is minimal and covers some but not all of the required elements for the design.	The budget is appropriate and funds most of the required elements of the design.	The budget is comprehensive and adequate to fund the design.