

Sector Survey of Executive Education Programs for Public Service Professionals

October 2006

Executive Summary

In July 2006 NASPAA conducted the first comprehensive survey of the scope, format, and characteristics of Executive Education programs for public service professionals. The survey was conducted in response to the growing interest by NASPAA member schools in developing or expanding quality Executive Education programs. The survey addresses both degree and non-degree Executive Education programs. With over 50 NASPAA schools currently offering Executive Education programs the survey reveals several key findings and implications regarding the state of the Executive Education sector.

Executive Masters Programs

- The majority of Executive Masters students are over 36 years old, have at least 6 years of professional experience, and 4 years of management experience.
- Executive Masters students hail from a variety of sectors, but the federal and non-profit sector represent the largest proportion of students.
- The majority of Executive Masters take 24 months to complete and enrolled less than 100 students in 2005-2006.
- Two-thirds of the Executive Masters programs followed a cohort model and weekend and evening classes were offered the most often.
- On average 50 percent of Executive Masters students received financial assistance from their employers and 15 percent from fellowships or scholarships.
- In addition to transcripts, personal statements, and recommendations, most Executive Masters programs require some professional experience for admission.

Non-Degree Executive Education Programs

- Certificate and customized programs represent the largest segment of non-degree Executive Education programs.
- A third of the schools also offered leadership training and international partnerships.

Implications for Supporting and Promoting Executive Education Programs

- Survey provides some baseline information to facilitate further discussion on what an Executive Masters program should look like and who it should target.
- Schools noted that maintaining relevant curriculum, improving marketing and promotion of programs, and securing financial assistance for Executive students were their dominant challenges in delivering quality Executive Education programs.
- Evaluating the impact of Executive Education programs, differentiation between Executive and Traditional MPA programs, and information about selectivity and program costs per student need to be explored further.

Introduction

Why conduct a survey?

A growing number of NASPAA member schools expressed an interest in developing or expanding Executive Education programs for public service professionals. Individually, schools pursued an ad hoc approach to learning more about the Executive Education sector. Given schools' demand for more information about Executive Education programs, this survey represents the first comprehensive survey of the scope of Executive Education programs for public service professionals. The survey examines what these programs look like, who they target, and opportunities for improving the quality and promotion of Executive Education programs.

Data Collection and Response Rate

In April 2006 NASPAA conducted an initial online survey of its member schools to determine which schools offered Executive Education programs. Based on the survey responses and additional web research by NASPAA staff, 57 schools were identified as offering some form of Executive Education program. This included both degree programs, such as an Executive MPA and non-degree programs, such as certificate and leadership programs. An online survey was sent to the principal representatives of the 57 schools identified as offering Executive Education programs. 27 schools responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 47 percent.

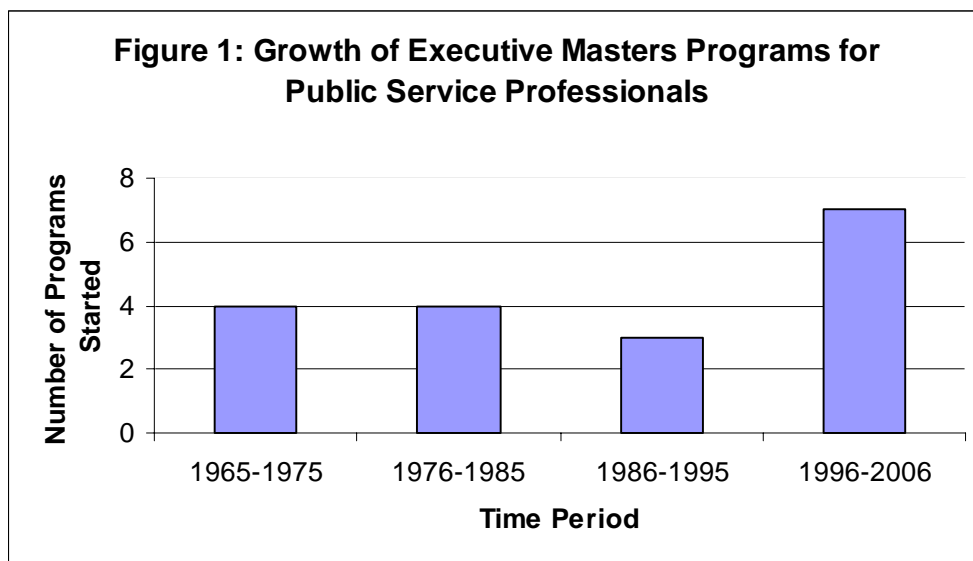
Structure of Report

The first section of the report details the survey results for degree executive programs. This section covers the history of Executive Masters programs, student demographics, program format, tuition and financial assistance, and admissions. The second section covers the scope of non-degree Executive Education programs. Specifically, identifies the most common types of non-degree executive programs and how many individuals tend to participate per school per program. The third section addresses the implications of the survey results, including defining opportunities and challenges in promoting and supporting Executive Education programs for public service professionals.

Executive Masters Programs

History of Executive Masters Programs

Even though NASPAA has only recently highlighted the presence of Executive Masters programs for public sector professionals, some programs have been around since the late 1960s and 1970s. Figure 1 illustrates that the number of Executive Masters programs has grown steadily since the late 1960s and experienced a significant expansion in the past decade.



Schools have generally adopted two approaches in offering Executive Masters degrees. The first approach is to offer a discrete Executive Masters program for public service professionals separate from their traditional MPA program. The discrete programs, which encompass a variety of names, such as Executive Masters of Public Administration and Master of Program Management, have a distinct curriculum, credit requirements, and admission process from the traditional MPA. Ten schools identified their programs as discrete Executive Masters programs. The second approach that schools have adopted is to offer an executive track or option within their traditional MPA degree. This approach allows experienced public service professionals, who are working full-time, to take classes part-time, in the evenings, or on weekends. In offering an executive track or option schools make special exceptions in the curriculum requirement to reflect their practitioner experience, such as not requiring internships. However, the students are expected to meet the curriculum requirements of the traditional MPA. Ten schools identified their programs as an Executive or Mid-career track within the traditional MPA degree program.

The degree name Executive MPA has been adopted by eleven schools as the title for their Executive Masters degree for experienced public sector professionals. However, a number of schools do not use the term Executive in the title, they rather differentiate the degree by calling it something other than an Masters in Public Administration, such as Master of Policy Management.

Student Demographics

Conventional wisdom suggests that Executive Masters programs target older, more experienced professionals. The survey results mirror this assumption. All of the schools that responded to the survey estimated that the average age of the students enrolled in their Executive Masters programs exceeded 30, whereas the average age of a traditional MPA student is 27. Moreover, 70 percent of the schools estimated the average age of the Executive Masters students between 36-45 years old. Executive Masters students demonstrated some degree of professional and management experience. Over 80 percent of the schools responded that the Executive Masters students had over 6 years of professional experience and over 4 years of management experience. Overall, Executive Masters students equally represented male and female students.

Table A: Executive Masters Student Demographics by Criteria

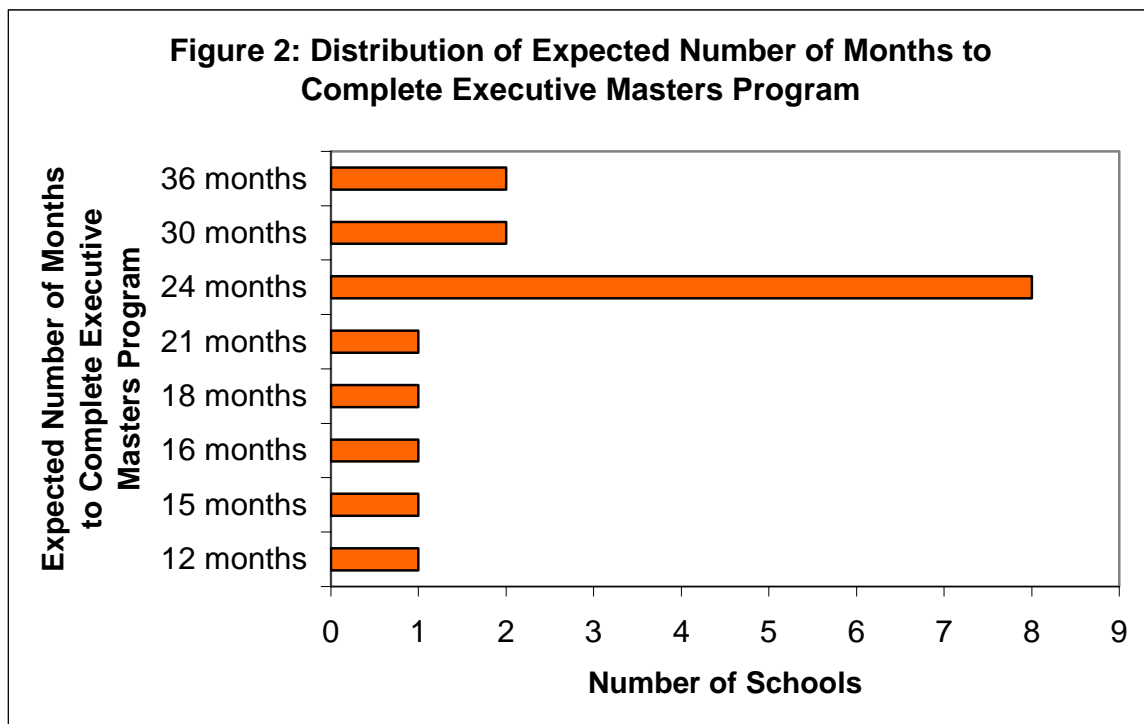
Demographic Criteria	Percentage of Responses
Average Age	
31-35 years old	26%
36-40 years old	42%
41-45 years old	32%
Gender	
Percentage Male	50%
Percentage Female	50%
Average Years of Professional Experience	
0-5 years	16%
6-10 years	42%
11-15 years	37%
Over 16 years	5%
Average Years of Management Experience	
0-3 years	5%
4-7 years	63%
8-11 years	27%
Over 12 years	5%

Executive Masters students represented a variety of professional backgrounds. Based on the responses though, federal employees comprised the largest fraction of Executive Masters students, followed by non-profit professionals. Professionals employed by the state and local governments equally represented the third largest fraction of Executive Masters students. Even though private sector employees represented the smallest fraction of Executive Masters students, half of the schools that responded to the question, ranked the private sector as second or third in where their students are employed.

Program Format

The majority of schools that responded to the survey enrolled less than 100 students in their Executive Masters program during the academic year of 2005-2006. Twelve schools enrolled between 0-50 students and four schools enrolled 51-100 students. Three schools enrolled more than 100 students during the same academic period. It is interesting to note both of the largest programs have been around since 1975.

Over 60 percent of the schools that responded to the questions about their program format noted that they followed a cohort approach, where an intact group takes all the courses together, in their Executive Masters program. On average, schools responded that students were expected to complete the Executive Masters programs within 24 months. One school expected students to complete the program in 12 months, while two schools that structured the Executive Masters on a cohort model allowed students completed the program in as little as 15 and 16 months. As Figure 2 illustrates Executive Masters programs generally expected students to complete the program in 12 to 36 months, whereby over 50 percent of the Executive Education programs expected students to complete the program in 24 months.



Schools employ a variety of schedule options to meet the needs of Executive Masters students. The most frequent scheduling options offered evening and weekend classes. However, over 30 percent of the schools that answered the question responded that they offered online courses, week-long intensives, and classes on Fridays.



Tuition and Financial Assistance

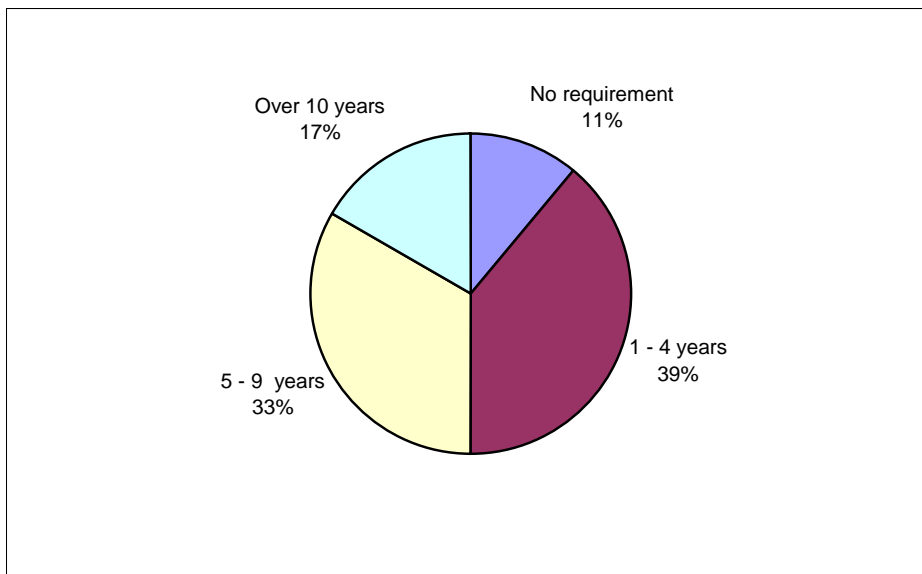
There are many different ways to calculate tuition for Executive Masters programs, such as by credit hour or annual tuition fees. The complete tuition for Executive Masters programs ranged from \$20,000 to \$44,000 based on the schools that responded to the survey items. About half of the schools noted that their tuition included course materials. Three schools provided meals and accommodations as part of the tuition to the Executive Masters program and one school provided laptops as part of the tuition. One school include travel to Washington D.C. as part of the program cost.

Given the cost of Executive Masters programs, NASPAA was also interested in learning more about the level of financial assistance students receive from their current employers or fellowships/scholarships. The schools reported that between 10 and 100 percent of their students received financial assistance from their employers, where on average 55 percent of the students received on some financial assistance from their employers. Based on the survey responses, on average only 16 percent of the students received financial assistance from a fellowship or scholarship. One of the limitations of the survey though is that it does not capture how much of the total tuition cost is covered by employers or fellowships/scholarships. The survey results do suggest that a significant portion of Executive Masters students are self-funded.

Admissions

Of the 16 schools that responded to questions about admissions to the Executive MPA programs, the schools were unanimous in their applicant requirements to submit a personal statement, transcript, and written recommendations. Six schools required an interview and four schools required submitting results from a standardized admissions test, such as GRE or GMAT. Five schools identified the additional requirement of documentation of an applicant's work experience, such as a resume. 13 out of the 16 schools that answered questions about admissions noted that they required a minimum number of years of professional experience. Almost 40 percent required one to four years and over 30 percent required five to nine years of professional experience to apply to the Executive Masters program. Over 15 percent of the schools required 10 or more years of professional experience to qualify for the Executive Masters program.

Figure 4: Minimum Number of Years of Professional Experience Required for Admission into Executive Masters Programs



Non-Degree Executive Education Programs

In addition to offering Executive Masters degrees for experienced public service professionals, a number of schools offer a variety of non-degree programs targeting a range of educational needs. Certificate programs, defined as a series of courses of a specific topic, such as program management and homeland security, represented the most common type of non-degree Executive Education program. The majority of certificate programs enrolled less than 50 participants in 2005-2006. Customized programs tailored for specific government agencies and non-profit organizations represented the second largest category of Executive Education programs. These types of programs ranged in enrollment size from less than 50 to more than 200 for 2005-2006 academic year. Leadership training for government officials and non-profit professionals that generally enrolled either less than 50 or over 200 participants represented the third most commonly offered Executive Education program. A third of the schools that responded to the survey noted that they participated in an international partnership with non-U.S. academic or government institutions to provide Executive Education.

Type of non-degree Executive Education Program	Number of Responses	Estimated Number of Participants in 2005-2006 (Percentage of schools)
Certificate Program A series of courses on a specific topic	19	1-50 (70%)
Customized Program Tailored courses for specific agencies	17	1-50 (36%) 51-100 (21%) 101-200 (21%) Over 200 (21%)
Leadership Training A one-day or week-long seminar	13	1-50 (42%) Over 200 (42%)
International Partnership Programs with non-U.S. academic institutions or agencies	10	1-50 (90%)

Implications of Sector Survey

Defining Opportunities

Conducting the sector survey addresses several opportunities for promoting and supporting Executive Education for public service professionals. The survey represents the first comprehensive analysis of the scope, format, and characteristics of Executive Education programs and students. The survey results serve several purposes, including:

- **Educate NASPAA member schools about the state of the Executive Education** – Given the demand for more information about the Executive Education programs, the primary goal of the survey is to provide sector relevant information back to NASPAA member schools.
- **Encourage greater transparency in sharing relevant information** – In order to continue to improve the quality of Executive Education programs, the collection and timely dissemination of sector relevant information is useful in defining benchmarks and identify opportunities for improvement.
- **Characterize the best features of Executive Education programs** – Schools that responded to the survey noted that Executive Education programs are effective because they emphasize application of course content in their work, offer a cohort model, and tailor their course schedule to meet the scheduling needs of full-time working professionals.
- **Identify ways to measure the impact of Executive Education programs** – An effective way to promote Executive Education programs is to measure and publicize the impact of Executive Education programs in how public service professionals do their jobs. Schools identified several approaches to measuring the impact of their respective programs, including exit surveys, alumni surveys and focus groups, and tracking the career patterns and promotions trends of alumni.

Challenges Remain

The responses to the sector survey also confirmed several challenges expressed individually by program directors in supporting and promoting quality Executive Education programs. The responses generally fell into three categories:

- **Curriculum Development** – Respondents noted that maintaining a “cutting edge,” and rigorous curriculum relevant for experienced public service professionals is an on-going challenge.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – Public Service Executive Education programs face recruitment challenges in competing against Executive MBA programs, attracting students from the non-degree programs to degreed programs, and offering flexible scheduling and course formats.
- **Financial Assistance** – Shrinking education and training budgets at all levels of government make it financially challenging for prospective students to enroll in Executive Education programs.