

Transforming Public Affairs Education

Through NASPAA Accreditation Standards

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NASPAA CONFERENCE

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NASPAA Accreditation

- **Accreditor of graduate degrees for public service:** (MPA, MPP, Executive MPA, and similar degrees)
- **161 programs accredited in the U.S.**
 - 60% of NASPAA member institutions accredited
- **Standards created by academics from member schools with input from public service professionals**
- **Accredited members vote on standards revisions**

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Impact

- **Specialized professional accreditation**
 - Voluntary, not high stakes
 - Developmental for field and individual programs
- **Deep impact on curricula of both accredited and non-accredited programs**
 - Curriculum and standards benchmarked by programs worldwide
- **Does not accredit internationally at this time but does consult and share information**

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Characteristics

- **Mission-based accreditation**
- **Review based largely on self-study report and peer review site visit**
- **Important standards include**
 - Mission, assessment, guiding performance
 - Program governance, Faculty Qualifications
 - Curriculum
 - Student admissions and support services
 - Distance education

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Context of Change

Why revise the accreditation standards now?

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Changing World of Public Affairs

- **Flat world**
 - Security challenges of a post 9-11 world
 - Global challenges (environmental, economic)
- **Changing management expectations**
 - Rapid technological change
 - Service delivery mechanisms
 - Managing across sectors
 - Networking and collaboration
 - Increasing measurement of performance
- **Changing populations**
 - Demographic change-diversity, aging
 - Increasing income inequality

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Changing World of Education for Public Affairs

- **Maturation of public affairs as a discipline**
- **“Business” of public affairs education**
- **Rise of executive education**
 - **Flexibility for adult learners**
 - **Public service retirement tsunami**
- **Innovative and blended curricula**
 - **Social entrepreneurship, etc.**
- **Unique delivery mechanisms**
 - **Online programs, distance campuses**
- **Increasing partnerships between universities**
 - **contract education of cohorts**

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Changing World of U.S. Accreditation

- **Three trends in higher ed policy in the U.S.**
 - **Accountability**
 - **Publicly posted student learning outcomes**
 - **Outcomes assessment**
 - **Comparability**
 - **Among peer programs, benchmarking information**
 - **Students as consumers**
 - **Transparency**
 - **Indicators related to public service outcomes**
 - **Current NASPAA process very closed**

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Process for NASPAA Standards Revisions

- **Appointment of Standards Steering Committee with (former) chairs of COPRA, Standards Committee, NASPAA President, program directors, practitioners, etc.**
- **Development of guiding principles BEFORE revising standards**
- **3-year process with many occasions for input from academic and practitioner communities**

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Timeline Overview

- **April 2006: NS2009 Launched at Executive Council Strategic Planning Retreat**
- **October 2007: Guiding Principles Presented and Discussed with NASPAA Members**
- **Spring 2008: Working draft of new Standards is presented**
 - April 16, 2008: Regional focus group day
- **October 2008: Second working draft presented**
- **October 2009: Vote on Standards**

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NASPAA Standards 2009 Steering Committee Membership

- **Jeff Raffel (Chair), University of Delaware**
- **Jonathan Breul, IBM Center for the Business of Government**
- **Sallyanne Harper, U.S. Government Accountability Office**
- **Marv Mandell, University of Maryland at Baltimore County**
- **Steve Maser (Chair of Standards Committee), Willamette University**
- **Dan Mazmanian, Bedrosian Center on Governance**

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NASPAA Standards 2009 Steering Committee Membership (cntd.)

- **Sy Murray, Cleveland State University**
- **Kathy Newcomer, (Immediate Past President of NASPAA)
George Washington University**
- **Michelle Piskulich, Oakland University**
- **BJ Reed (Chair of the NASPAA Data Task Force), University of Nebraska at Omaha**
- **Michelle Saint-Germain, California State University at Long Beach**
- **Hal Steinberg, Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board**

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Accomplishments to date

- Strategic planning retreat to initiate process
- Sponsored panels at public administration conferences
 - NASPAA Conference: Future of Public Service
 - Third Transatlantic Dialogue, U of Delaware
- Feedback sessions (ASPA, ICMA, COPRA meeting)
- Steering committee meetings and conference calls
- Accreditation Summit with other agencies at NASPAA
- Conducted outreach (Surveys, conferences, e-feedback)
- Drafted provisional Guiding Principles and White Papers

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What's next?

- Revise principles (November 2007)
- Standards Committee begins drafting new standards from principles (with Steering Committee)
- More public input and member feedback including April 16, 2008 National NASPAA Focus Group Day
- Discussion of proposed new standards at NASPAA Conference (October 2008)
- Vote at 2009 NASPAA Conference
- Implementation

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Discussion

**Your input is needed to develop
the Guiding Principles!**

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Philosophy of NASPAA Standards

Public Service Values-Driven, Mission-Based

- What makes the MPA/ MPP distinctive?
 - Shared mission: Promoting values in community governance such as accountability, responsibility, justice, transparency, and improving welfare
- Mission-Based accreditation maintained
 - Focuses on important processes and allows for diversity
- Important Features
 - Learning environment still important
 - Measurable objectives that relate to public service mission

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Proposed Guiding Principles

- **Public Service Mission:** The mission of every program should include having a positive impact on public service in a way that is demonstrable to prospective students, peers, and external audiences.
- **Embrace challenges and change:** Programs should demonstrate both insight and foresight to respond to changing needs in public service.

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Proposed Guiding Principles

- **Accountability:** In the interest of promoting public service and affirming a commitment to public accountability, the NASPAA accreditation process should publicly communicate achieved student learning outcomes.

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Proposed Guiding Principles

Competencies for Public Service Education:

Curricular competencies identified in the curriculum standard should:

- achieve adequate specificity leading to a collective identity among those engaged in public service education;
- acknowledge and encourage the diversity among the programs seeking accreditation;
- and ensure students will be capable of acting ethically and effectively in pursuit of the public interest.

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Proposed Guiding Principles

- Scope of Accreditation (International):
NASPAA seeks to lead in new ways and to improve the quality of graduate education for students seeking to work in public service worldwide. NASPAA accreditation should not preclude international programs absent a compelling practical or values-driven reason.

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Proposed Guiding Principles

- **Learning Environment: NASPAA Standards should include multiple dimensions of quality, including the learning environment.**

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Breakout Groups

- **Your assignment: discuss the given issue and then your own issues**
- **The Goal: To gather insights, concerns and ideas for the new NASPAA Standards**
- **Changing rooms?**

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Breakout Groups

- 1. Public Sector Values/ Uniqueness of Sector - Orcas**
- 2. Student Competencies - Blakely**
- 3. Outcomes Assessment - St. Helens**
- 4. Transparency, Data and Public Information - Olympic**
- 5. International Scope of Accreditation - Adams**
- 6. Learning Environment and Faculty Sufficiency - Bakers**

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