Analysis Summary

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regarding
Albany State University
Global MPA Program

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CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Albany State University (ASU) is a four-year regional University with several masters-level graduate programs, located in Albany, Georgia in southwest Georgia. It is a part of the University System of Georgia, serving Southwest Georgia and beyond. The Master of Public Administration (MPA) program was created in the 1980s to prepare students for leadership roles in government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other settings. The MPA program became professionally accredited in the mid-1990s by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and continues to have professional accreditation.

The MPA program has the required five core faculty members required for professional accreditation. Until recently the program has been a traditional on-campus classroom-based program. Enrollment has fluctuated around 50 to 60 students. The program has multiple concentrations and graduates about ten students each year.

Administrators of Albany State University have encouraged the MPA program to offer courses online to increase enrollment and to make the program more financially viable. Faculty members have different perceptions of what constitutes effective public affairs education, given the historic mission of the University and the program. The pandemic and other factors have created increased challenges and have accelerated modifications of program delivery across campus, included other graduate programs. The present Administration of ASU is committed to supporting the MPA program and to provide additional financial support as the program grows by increasing online delivery of instructional services.

The PD must be mindful of NASPAA requirements and must make reports to NASPAA and prepare for site visits every several years. We are presently navigating a possible transition from traditional delivery to online delivery by listing courses as hybrid. If we can gain the additional faculty lines needed to maintain two parallel programs – one traditional and one online – we will need to maintain accreditation standards for each of the two parallel programs. We cannot maintain NASPAA accreditation for our traditional delivery program if we create a parallel online MPA program which does not meet NASPAA accreditation standards. NASPAA leaders understand that we are in a time of adjustment and will work with us during this time of transition.

My supervisor who is the PD has confirmed the information above. There are about 40 NASPAA-accredited online MPA programs, as shown below.

https://www.geteducated.com/top-online-colleges/naspaa-accredited-online-mpa-programs/

https://www.publicadministrationdegrees.com/naspaa-accredited-mpa-programs

CLIENT INTRODUCTION

I teach the public policy course in the MPA program at Albany State University. Since the fall of 2021 I have taught the course using a systems-thinking approach. I asked my students last semester to register their opinions regarding the course at the end of the semester. Almost all of them agreed or strongly agreed that they prefer the systems approach introduced in the course. However, several of the students did ***not*** express agreement that they feel prepared to participate in and contribute to the policy making process. The course is intended to help address the five program competences prescribed by NASPAA for all its accredited public affair's programs, as follows.

Through coursework and upon graduating, all students should have achieved the NASPAA Competencies and be able to effectively:

1. Lead and Manage in Public Governance;
2. Participate in and contribute to the public policy process;
3. Analyze, synthesize, think creatively, solve problems, and make decisions;
4. Articulate and apply public service perspectives; and
5. Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

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Figure 1: NASPAA Competencies

As the instructor last semester, I observed that not all the students demonstrated use of the critical thinking skills needed to contribute to the public policy process. I see a gap related to competency number two shown above. I think that the cause for the gap between observed and desired outcomes relates to competency number three shown above. As the client, I want to improve the course in its capacity to help students analyze, synthesize, think creatively, solve problems, and make decisions. I want present and future students in the course to become more proficient systems-thinkers.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Figure 2 is the gap analysis between actual and desired student performance last semester, as explained above.

Actual Performance	Desired Performance	Primary Cause	Percent of Total Discrepancy
60% of students apparently not having or not reading textbook	Every student has and reads the textbook	Motivation	20%
10% of students having difficulty with technology	Every student has access to needed technology and ability to use it	Resources	10%
10% of students having minimal interest in current events	Every student has substantial interest in current events	Motivation Recruitment practices	10%
70% of students did not adequately relate social problems to existing systems-thinking archetypes	All students relate social problems to existing systems-thinking archetypes	Lack of knowledge Lack of skill	60%
		Total:	100%

Figure 2: Gap Analysis

<u>PURPOSE</u>

The purpose of analysis assessment is to enable students to relate social problems to existing systems-thinking archetypes.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

My instructional goals going forward are the following, reflecting the six dimensions of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Knowledge

1. List systems archetypes particularly relevant to public policy design.

Comprehension

2. Identify the difference between a balancing loop and a reinforcing loop in a visual model of systems diagram.

Application

3. Interpret existing archetypal visual models of a systems diagram in the context of public policy formulation.

Analysis

4. Predict unintended consequences of policy interventions.

Synthesis

5. Plan to mitigate unintended consequences of policy interventions that cannot be avoided.

Evaluation

6. Appraise the likely long-term consequences of a policy decision.

LEARNER AUDIENCE PROFILE

Learner groups

Until recently the student body of the MPA program included adults employed on campus and others living within commuting distance of campus. Some have been ASU students who have recently graduated from an undergraduate and who have decided to continue their education at ASU. Until very recently the program has not been able to accommodate students unable to attend classes on campus.

Characteristics

Almost all students in the MPA program have full-time employment and/or family responsibilities. A majority are women. A majority of the students in the MPA program are provisionally admitted. Almost all have student loans to help pay their tuition, fees and other related expenses. Most range in age from their mid 20s to about age 40. Most are African Americans. Over the years, several have been international students, primarily from African nations. Over the years there has been substantial variety is the students' degrees of preparedness for graduate-level academic work. Additional information about the characteristics of students in the MPA program is available at the following URL.

https://www.asurams.edu/academic-affairs/college-of-business-education-professional-studies/public-administration.php

Number

Over the years the number of students in the MPA program has usually fluctuated from the 40s to the 60s. As of fall 2021 there were 42 students in the program, as indicated in the link above.

Location

Albany State University has two campuses in Albany, Georgia, resulting from the consolidation of the former Darton College with the then Albany State University. Faculty members of the MPA program have always been housed on East Campus adjacent to the Flint River and downtown Albany. The members of the MPA program recently relocated to the new Fine Arts Center. Our traditional courses meet in classrooms in the Fine Arts Center. Our recently admitted online students are not required to attend class meetings on campus.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

I estimate that addition of a parallel online MPA program will require addition of three additional full-time faculty lines including their salaries and benefits. There may also need to be additional administrative support services and some additional computer technologies.

Budget needs	Range of costs
Additional faculty members	$180,000 to $250,000
Additional administrative support services	$ 30,000 to $ 50,000
Additional computer technologies	$ 20,000 to $ 30,000

PROBABLE DELIVERY SYSTEMS

As indicated in the contextual background statement above, the MPA program is in the midst of change to incorporate online offerings for our students and to increase our number of students to help make the program more successful. We are presently admitting both traditional and online students, although we only offer one academic concentration online. The present plan (Option A below) is to grow the online program to have the resources to gain additional faculty lines to support two parallel MPA degree programs – one on-campus and the other online. In that case both program delivery systems must become worthy of accreditation in order to maintain NASPAA accreditation for either of them. They must both be the same academic program, although they may not necessarily include the same array of academic concentrations. At the present time, moving the entire traditional system online is not an option.

Option A

Option A is the present trajectory. We will maintain the existing traditional MPA program while adding a new online MPA program; while navigating multiple constraints regarding resources and accreditation requirements.

From an administrative perspective, this strikes me as difficult and risky path to follow. From my present perspective as an emerging instructional designer, I think I should assume that in the present time of program evolution I should assume that five (5) faculty members are going to have to continue the traditional program while also launching a new online program. It will likely only be after revenues increase substantially that one or more MPA faculty lines may be made available.

Therefore, design decisions should be made with an eye on accommodating both local MPA students and those at a distance while steering between the lines of accreditation requirements and campus administrations including the College of Professional Studies, the Graduate School, the Registrar's Office, the Office of Financial Aid, and so forth. This is where I must depend upon the Program Director to define where the lines are and even press him to specify what the practical constraints are, realizing that there are uncertainties involved. For example, the Dean of our College is retiring, and we do not know who will become the new dean. Assumptions made in analysis may have to be modified during the ADDIE instructional design process. As an emerging instructional designer, I think I should avoid stirring up "politics" while being mindful of the need to apply instructional design principals with enough tolerance in them to accommodate reasonable changes in the curriculum or the mode of delivery.