## SYMPOSIUM ON TRANSFORMATIONS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION

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Symposium on Transformations in Public Affairs Education: Challenges, Progress, and Strategies

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Biographical Sketch

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Symposium on Transformations in Public Affairs Education: Challenges, Progress, and Strategies

The institutions and organizations that public affairs graduates enter are experiencing unprecedented change. Global forces are transforming governance. Information technologies are transforming commerce and communications. Contracting out, outsourcing, privatization, and reinvention are transforming entire public service industries.

This symposium has its roots in the transformations buffeting schools of public affairs, public administration and management, and public policy. As Professor Donald Kettl’s introductory article, “The Transformation of Governance and Public Affairs Education,” explains, the National Academy of Public Administration’s (NAPA) Priority Issues Task Force recently expressed concern in 2000 that the nation’s school of public affairs, administration, and policy may not be adjusting to what it termed the transformation of governance. The Task Force concluded that future public servants might not be receiving the education they will need to cope with the transformation underway.

The symposium is intended to define the contours of the transformation, identify the leading edge of what it demands of public affairs programs and educators, and to take stock of what steps faculty and programs are doing in response to the transformation. Among the questions it seeks to answer are:

- How will the transformation alter the content or delivery of public affairs education?
- How will the transformation change how we teach specific topics?
What are the values that public affairs graduates should possess in the transformed public service? What can public affairs programs and educators do to best transmit these values?

Professor Kettl’s introduction argues that the competing models for educating for public service—the public administration, public management, and policy analysis approaches—fall short, even when their best elements are combined, of charting new strategies at the frontiers of the transformation of governance. Among the challenges that Kettl suggests scholars and educators must address is the migration of public service from government to a wider range of institutions, acting in a context that is global rather than national in scope, and incorporating new forms of public participation into governance. The penultimate effect of these developments is to offer public affairs scholars and educators unique opportunities for innovation, creativity, and leadership as we progress into the twenty-first century.

Comptroller General David M. Walker, who heads the United States General Accounting Office (GAO), contends that at this stage of the transformation of governance, public expectations of government have never been higher—and they continue to rise. The public’s expectations and concerns, he contends, boil down to two questions: “What is the proper role for the federal government in the 21st century?” and “How should the government do business in the 21st century?” He contends the questions are simple but the answers are not. A reassuring irony of Comptroller General Walker’s difficult questions is that they will be familiar to many public affairs scholars and teachers in that they mirror the questions Woodrow Wilson (1887, p. 187) originally posed for the field in 1887.
The challenges GAO has identified for the federal government—long-range budget crisis, human capital crisis, and reforming government programs and operations—are by-products of many of the challenges identified by Kettl. The world outside of government is changing rapidly. Government programs, policies, and organizations are, conversely, not changing rapidly enough.

From his vantage point at GAO, Comptroller General Walker offers several valuable insights about how graduate public affairs programs can contribute to the transformation of governance. One is increasing the exposure of our students to principles and case studies of leadership. Another is performance measurement. The Comptroller General gives public affairs programs and their graduates high marks for substantial, rigorous attention to program evaluation, performance measurement, and research methods. A third, more the domain of faculty than students, is the need for better research about the role of third parties in the design and implementation of federal policies. Finally, echoing Kettl, he recommends that we encourage students to become familiar with and competent in many tools of government, not just hierarchical organizations. In light of the importance of third parties in public service delivery, students must be prepared to employ such indirect approaches as loans, tax subsidies, and regulation.

The next four contributions to the symposium discuss in detail issues raised in the Kettl and Walker articles. In “Making the Connection: E-government and Public Affairs Education,” Professors Soonhee Kim and Karen Layne confront the implications of information technology, which is simultaneously a driver and tool for the transformation of governance. The authors focus on electronic government (e-government), which is the
use of technology, particularly web-based Internet applications, for government services. They predict that e-government will transform the way government does business. This transformation will, in turn, change how government executives perceive information technology, changing it from a staff function to a driver of strategic change.

Kim and Layne then discuss the types of curricular change associated with emerging e-government issues. They propose two levels of change for the MPA curriculum: (1) adding e-government management issues; and (2) creating content focusing on public leaders in e-government. They suggest that management issues should be addressed across the curriculum in courses such as public management, human resources management, and organization theory. Their second proposal argues for an advanced curriculum that develops e-government leaders. Their emphasis on leadership for e-government reinforces Comptroller General David Walker’s call for more attention to leadership principles and case studies.

In “Going Global: International Activities by U.S. Schools of Public Policy and Management to Transform Public Affairs Education,” Erik A. Devereux and Dan Durning review the international outreach activities of public policy and management programs. Their article reports on a survey of Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) schools. The results from the survey are particularly useful for understanding where schools have been and where they are headed. Devereux and Durning use their survey results and analysis of other research to identify specific elements of a global strategy. From a practical standpoint, they identify obstacles for implementing a coherent international strategy and tactics for overcoming obstacles.
Like Drs. Devereux and Durning, Professor William C. Rivenbark empirically grounds his analysis in “Teaching Performance Management in Public Affairs Education.” Rivenbark conducted a mail survey of 243 programs affiliated with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) in August 2000. Rivenbark’s survey revealed that public affairs programs are deeply involved in offering instruction on productivity improvement and performance measurement. The conclusions he draws from the survey coincide with those of Comptroller General David Walker. Public Affairs programs are already well along in supporting the performance management requirements of the transformation of governance. By the same token, the competencies that public affairs programs already possess can be used as powerful tools for increasing their contribution to future capacity building for the transformation of governance.

Another natural by-product of the transformation to results-management, outsourcing, and the growing reliance on third parties is the increasing ethical responsibilities facing professionals in public service. In “Rethinking the Role of Ethics in Public Affairs Education,” Noah M. J. Pickus and Troy Dostert raise interesting and important questions attendant to the transformation. They ask:

“How, for example, can we craft public policy in an increasingly pluralistic society characterized by pervasive and often intractable moral disagreements? How will democracies maintain sovereignty in the face of increasingly globalized economic and political power? And how will we navigate the changing and complex interrelationships among public, private, and nonprofit sectors?
Pickus and Dostert identify two traditional ways in which public affairs programs have prepared their students to meet the ethical challenges of public service. Training students in professional ethics codes is one of those traditions. The ethics codes of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and American Society for Public Administration are examples of codes set forth to guide members of professional associations in fulfilling their responsibilities. A second traditional approach used to actively engage students in ethical issues is what Pickus and Dostert call ethical awareness. Ethical awareness typically uses several abstract normative frameworks to confront policy dilemmas. As Pickus and Dostert contend: “The predominant emphasis is on developing the analytical reasoning capabilities of the individual, so that he or she can assess ethical dilemmas, recognize their morally significant features, and bring to bear whatever ethical frameworks ensure the best “fit” in solving them.”

The traditional approaches to public affairs ethics education fall short of what Pickus and Dostert view as necessary to prepare public affairs students for the transformed governance context that they increasingly confront. To augment the ethics codes and ethical awareness traditions, Pickus and Dostert propose and develop a new approach—ethics as collaborative judgment. They envision the ethics as collaborative judgment approach as more grounded, contextual and collaborative than traditional alternatives. They discuss how the collaborative judgment approach is better suited to the characteristics of the transformation of governance and its pedagogical requirements.

The symposium concludes with a Creative Pedagogy feature. In “Educating for the New Public Service: Implications for the Transformation of Governance,” Gordon Whitaker and ....describe the process and content of how the University of North
Carolina at Chapel Hill is redesigning its MPA core curriculum to accommodate two aspects of the sea change buffeting public affairs programs. The twin, interrelated developments they see driving change are the transformation of governance and the transformation in perceptions of public service students. Professors Whitaker and … offer a thoughtful exposition of how one MPA program is re-thinking who its customers are, the core knowledge, values and skills it seeks to impart to its students, and how these changes affect the content and delivery of the MPA core curriculum.

As a whole, the contributors to this symposium have laid an excellent foundation for on-going conversations about the meaning, strategies, and tactics for understanding and addressing the transformation of governance. This, of course, is not the first time that public affairs education has been called upon to adjust to major external changes. Many of our public affairs education institutions and traditions have their roots, in fact, in previous transformations. Several of the symposium contributions, drawing upon recent survey information unavailable to the NAPA Priority Issues Task Force, indicate that the profession has already made strides toward meeting challenges associated with the transformation.

In concluding, I return to a prominent theme of the transformation--that old relationships and organizational forms are giving way to less hierarchical, multi-sectoral, and more geographically dispersed relationships and organizational forms. Our public affairs education enterprises must prepare our students to flourish within these new contexts. By the same token, the key players at the center of the transformations of governance bear responsibility for developing partnerships with public affairs, public administration, and public policy programs to advance our collective and shared interests.
This symposium can serve as a catalyst for the conversations necessary to stimulate fulfillment of reciprocal obligations of the public affairs education community and our diverse public and private partners.
References