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The Public Affairs Faculty Manual: A Guide to the Effective Management of Public Affairs Programs Edited by Bruce McDonald, III and William Hatcher

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In *The Public Affairs Faculty Manual: A Guide to the Effective Management of Public Affairs Programs*, editors Bruce McDonald III and William Hatcher, provide a broad overview on designing, leading, and managing a public affairs (PA) program. The edited volume is explicitly written for PA faculty in new leadership roles in higher education, though it is a useful reference for administrators of all levels and even useful for regular faculty. Despite excellent journals focused on PA education, such as *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, and *Teaching Public Administration*, there is a clear need for a focused cultivation of fundamental knowledge, research, and experience-informed advice for academic administrators in PA programs.

The book covers an expansive range of topics over 15 chapters that are of practical concern for academic administrators planning and delivering a PA program. The chapters are written by 19 different scholars with a staggering amount of administrative experience as directors, chairs, and deans. Chapters 2 through 4 provide basic knowledge on the institutional context and structure of PA programs. These chapters form an essential conceptual foundation for the rest of the book. Chapters 5 through 10 introduce a series of practical administrative tools to manage and develop PA programs. Chapters 11 through 14 connect various internal and external stakeholder concerns to program development.

Essential Knowledge

Chapter 2 explains the different types of PA degrees. While Master of Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Public Policy degrees are the primary focus, other specialized degrees are outlined, such as the Master in Non-Profit Management and Master in Public Policy and Administration degrees. The chapter concludes with a practical discussion on differentiating a PA program through understanding and meeting the demands of a regional market, aligning

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the program with an institution's mission and resources, adapting curriculum to produce either generalist or specialist students, and determining the right mix of theory-driven and applied courses.

Chapter 3 covers the theory and structure of academic governance models and how they align with NASPAA accrediting standards for shared governance. The chapter centers around two broadly defined governance models: bureaucratic and collegial. Ultimately, the author argues that all of the decision-making models are flawed and there is no ideal shared governance model.

Chapter 4 outlines the roles and responsibilities of program directors, chairs, and deans while highlighting the motivations and practical concerns of pursuing and accepting an administrative position. The discussion is cleverly framed around matching administrative duties to a desired career path. This framing allows for an exhaustive discussion of the typical duties and responsibilities of program directors, department chairs, and college deans. The chapter culminates in a curated and practical list of concerns for those considering academic leadership.

Administrative Tools

Chapter 5 provides a primer on strategic planning for PA programs pursuing NASPAA accreditation. Those familiar with strategic planning will find the treatment of the subject brief, but the authors' focus on strategic planning to meet NASPAA accreditation standards expands the pertinent audience. The inclusion of data sources relevant to PA programs for those conducting programmatic analyses (e.g., SWOT) is especially useful for administrators considering a strategic planning initiative.

Chapter 6 is an overview of NASPAA accreditation and how the process is an important tool for program improvement. After a brief history of the inception of NASPAA accreditation and the current accreditation landscape, the chapter argues that the primary value of NASPAA accreditation is that it is a multi-faceted approach to program improvement and validation. The rest of the chapter discusses the accreditation process and how to connect it to program evaluation and revision.

Chapter 7 is a masterful introduction to public budgeting theory in a practical and accessible fashion for administrators that lack a budgeting background. The chapter starts by arguing that understanding a program's place in an academic unit is vital for gaining resources in a competitive academic environment. Then, the chapter outlines the technical issues of fund accounting, typical expenditure categories, and different budget formats. The chapter concludes by outlining three features (fiscal discretion, resource stability, and budgetary politics) of university budgeting.

Chapter 8 covers faculty development in the context of PA programs. Faculty development is increasingly more difficult due to diverse faculty development needs, structural racism in higher education, teaching evaluation shortcomings, lack of incentives for community-engaged scholarship, and fewer mentoring opportunities. A model of faculty development is developed based on clear communication of expectations, formative feedback, mentoring, tailored support, and the importance of building a community among faculty. Practical tips accompany each pillar of the faculty development model for administrators wishing to implement these practices.

Chapter 9 addresses the development of curriculum that meets the five universal competencies required for NASPAA accreditation, the process of curriculum development, how to connect a program's mission and course selection to its curriculum, and course design.

The chapter ties broad curriculum design and course selection to a program's strategic plan while providing valuable data and insight on possible courses and specializations.

Chapter 10 introduces program assessment in higher education and a framework for implementing it to meet NASPAA requirements. Developing student learning objectives (SLO) or clear statements on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should acquire, and attaching these statements to levels of learning (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) allows a program to create a curriculum map linking SLOs, levels of learning, and NASPAA universal competencies to specific courses. The development of SLOs provides clear goals and a curriculum map outlining how those goals will be met.

Connecting Stakeholders and Programs

Chapter 11 examines how the structuring of programs and courses can improve student outcomes (defined in the chapter as SLOs). Programs can improve SLOs by (1) ensuring admission requirements confirm students have the necessary foundation of skills to succeed, (2) sequencing courses so they logically build prerequisite knowledge, and (3) scheduling courses to ensure predictable content delivery. Instructors can also improve SLOs through the logical ordering of content, limiting activities not associated with learning, and enhancing student motivation. In addition, the author provides an illuminating and extremely useful discussion of andragogy (e.g., how to teach adults) as it applies to designing effective courses.

Chapter 12 provides an overview of recruitment and retention strategies that can be implemented by program directors to build a diverse student body. In addition to outlining general strategies evidenced by higher education recruitment scholarship, the authors suggest a variety of ways to recruit for PA programs and how to develop a recruitment strategy that builds on program strengths and enhances program diversity. The chapter concludes with a case study on successful recruitment from the Augusta University MPA program.

Chapter 13 explains how cultural competency and social equity can be integrated into a PA curriculum. Cultural competency (e.g., understanding and respecting diverse communities) and social equity are critical components of a modern PA program as they enhance the fairness and delivery of public services. The authors present practical guidance on how to build cultural competency into four common PA courses.

Chapter 14 outlines how a PA program can link to community outreach and engagement in a University. The chapter covers the history behind community outreach and service in higher education, and what administrators should consider if they want an applied research center. In addition to applied research, these centers offer students direct engagement opportunities, and help faculty develop service-learning projects. Advisory boards can also provide programs with a variety of recruitment benefits in addition to enhancing the community outreach capacity of the program.

Discussion

The volume has many strengths and fills a critical gap in knowledge and training that makes it a valuable reference to PA program administrators. By focusing on PA specifically, the volume is able to take concepts of general importance to academic administrators and connects them to specific PA issues and NASPAA accreditation. The book does its best work setting a knowledge foundation and then giving an overview of the various tools needed to develop, implement, and improve PA programs. Another strength of the book is that the

majority of chapters combine an academic treatment of the subjects with practical experience-based advice.

The book does have a few limitations. First, it is, by design, a broad presentation of material and not a deep treatment of the subjects. Faculty wishing to pursue accreditation or implement any of the administrative tools, like strategic planning, will want to find supplementary treatments of the material. Second, the book is missing chapters on fund raising in higher education and developing external stakeholder relationships through alumni relations and community partners. These are two areas of academic administration where inexperienced administrators will struggle without guidance.

Conclusion

Overall, this book is a useful resource for new and seasoned program administrators. Faculty new to administration will find information in the book useful for understanding and improving their programs. The volume covers a great breadth of material at the expense of depth at times, but the point of the book is not to be an exhaustive reference manual, but an overview of useful topics. In this area, this book has succeeded in providing much needed guidance for PA administrators.

Disclosure Statement

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Author Biography

Michael Overton is an assistant professor of public administration at the University of Idaho. His research explores the intersection of local government management and fiscal policy, specifically focusing on local government competition, economic development, and transportation financing issues.