



COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES
**MASTER OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

**CENTRAL MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY**

2025-2026 COMPETENCY LEARNING REPORT

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Executive Summary

The 2025–26 assessment results demonstrate that the Central Michigan University MPA program continues to effectively develop the competencies expected of public administration professionals. The program’s revised assessment approach distributes direct assessment across courses and artifacts, providing a more meaningful measure of student learning than reliance on a single capstone artifact. During this assessment cycle, 22 graduating students completed the exit survey, while 11 students’ work from PAD 611: Public Personnel Administration was evaluated as the direct measure of diversity competency.

Overall, survey results met or exceeded the program’s established 80% target across all assessed student learning outcomes:

- Leadership (SLO1): 94%
- Policy (SLO2): 100%
- Analysis (SLO3): 100%
- Public Service (SLO4): 100%
- Diversity (SLO5): 85%
- Communication (SLO6): 81%

The primary area identified for continued attention is SLO5: Diversity. Although 85% of graduating students reported that the program improved their diversity competency, only 55% demonstrated the expected level of competency in the direct assessment of course projects, falling below the program’s 70% target. This gap suggests that students may understand key diversity and cultural competency concepts but do not consistently apply them in their academic and professional analyses. The program will therefore continue to emphasize the practical application of diversity and cultural competency.

Overall, the findings do not indicate a need for major curricular changes; faculty will continue to monitor SLO5 and make targeted adjustments as needed to strengthen student application and support the program’s commitment to continuous improvement.

Background Information on the 2025-2026 Competency Assessment

NASPAA's five universal competencies, along with the program's mission-specific competencies, are introduced and reinforced throughout the required MPA curriculum (see Table 1). Previously, the program assessed all six competencies using the capstone artifact. However, reliance on a single capstone artifact did not always provide sufficient opportunity for students to demonstrate competency, particularly in the areas of diversity and policy.

Table 1. Competencies used to guide programmatic decisions.

NASPAA Universal Competencies	Programmatic Student Learning Objectives -MPA graduates will...	Mission-Specific Competency -MPA graduates will...
#1: To lead and manage in public governance #2: To participate in and contribute to the policy process #3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions #4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective #5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.	SLO1: Leadership ...develop the ability to lead in the public interest SLO2: Policy ...develop the ability to contribute to the policy process SLO3: Analysis ...produce analyses of data that solve organizational problems SLO4: Public Service ... articulate a public service perspective in their work SLO5: Diversity & SLO6: Communication ...develop the ability to productively engage with diverse stakeholders ...communicate in ways to enhance accountability to intersectoral stakeholders	SLO7: ...distinguish effective public sector management from ineffective public sector management by interacting with experienced practitioners.

During the 2024–25 academic year, the Public Administration Council (PAC), in consultation with the MPA Alumni Advisory Board (AB), approved revisions to the program's competency assessment cycle. The revised approach strategically distributes direct assessment across courses and artifacts to provide stronger evidence of student mastery in multiple competency areas (see Table 2).

Under the current assessment cycle, the Diversity competency will be evaluated using both a direct and an indirect measure. The direct measure will consist of student projects from PAD 611: Public Personnel Administration, while the indirect measure will consist of responses to the MPA student exit survey. The remaining competencies will be assessed using indirect measures during this cycle. This revised approach is intended to provide a

more targeted and meaningful assessment of student competency while reducing reliance on a single capstone artifact.

Table 2. Competency Analysis Schedule, Fall 2025-2030

Fall 2025	Leadership, Analysis, Public Service, Communication, Effective Public Service Management
Fall 2026	Diversity
Fall 2027	Policy
Fall 2028	Leadership, Analysis, Public Service, Communication, Effective Public Service Management
Fall 2029	Diversity
Fall 2030	Policy

Diversity Competency

Direct Measure: Rubric Applied to PAD 611: Public Personnel Administration Projects (Please see the rubric in Appendix D)

Data for the 2025–26 annual competency assessment were drawn from projects and online discussion contributions submitted by 11 students enrolled in PAD 611: Public Personnel Administration during the Fall 2025 semester.

Two independent assessors evaluated the student artifacts using the Diversity Competency rubric provided in Appendix D. The rubric includes five assessment criteria, each scored on a five-point scale: Superior (4), Above Average (3), Average (2), Below Average (1), and Unacceptable (0). Each assessor calculated an average score across the five criteria for each student. The student’s final competency score was calculated as the grand average of the two assessors’ scores.

Indirect Measures: Self-Assessment on Surveys (Please see the Student Exit Survey in Appendix E.)

Twenty-two students completed the exit survey administered at the conclusion of the 2025–26 capstone courses. Each Student Learning Outcome (SLO) was assessed by calculating the percentage of students who indicated that the MPA program helped them improve a moderate or substantial amount on two to six survey questions aligned with the respective outcome. The program’s assessment target is for 80% of students to indicate that the MPA program helped them improve on each SLO.

For example, SLO 1: Leadership was assessed using the average of responses to the following four questions:

- In your opinion, how important are the following public service skills to being an effective public administrator? Leading and Managing in the Public Interest
- Please indicate the extent to which the MPA program helped you improve your ability to do each of the following: Making Strategic Decisions
- Please indicate the extent to which the MPA program helped you improve your ability to do each of the following: Understanding Ethical Policies and Programs
- Please indicate the extent to which the MPA program helped you improve your ability to do each of the following: Applying Accountability and Transparency

2024-2025 Assessment Results

The program uses a color-coded scorecard to support the analysis and interpretation of assessment data. The scorecard allows stakeholders to quickly identify areas in which student outcomes exceed (green) or meet (blue) established program targets, as well as areas that fall below targets and require attention (red). The results provide a basis for discussion and decision-making regarding appropriate programmatic responses and contribute to the Central Michigan University MPA program's ongoing process of continuous improvement. Table 3 summarizes the 2025-2026 results and provides the previous cycle's results for comparative purposes.

Table 3: 2024-2025 Student Outcome Results for Student Learning Outcomes 1-6: Direct and Indirect Measures

Student Learning Outcome 1: Leadership			
Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	93%	94%
Student Learning Outcome 2: Policy			
Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	97%	100%
Student Learning Outcome 3: Analysis			

Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	93%	100%
Student Learning Outcome 4: Public Service			
Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	93%	100%
Student Learning Outcome 5: Diversity			
Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M1: Student Project/Online Discussion	70% students superior or above average	Not Assessed	55%
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	88%	85%
Student Learning Outcome 6: Communication			
Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	86%	81%
Student Learning Outcome 7: Program-Specific, Effective Public Management			
Measure	Target	24-25 Achievement	25-26 Achievement
M2: Student Exit Survey	80% students moderate/substantial improvement	93%	100%

Green: Target Exceeded

Blue: Target Met

Red: Target Not Met

The survey results (indirect measure) indicate that graduating students believe the MPA program strengthened their competencies across all six focal areas. Survey results exceeded the program's established target for each SLO, including both universal and program-specific competencies.

However, a disconnect persists between the direct and indirect measures of diversity competency. While 85% of graduating students reported confidence in areas such as “Communicating and interacting productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing society” and “Understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives,” only 55% successfully integrated these concepts into their course projects.

Recommendations

The 2025–26 assessment data indicate several positive trends and demonstrate significant programmatic strengths. Most notably, graduating students reported that the MPA program strengthened their competency across the six key areas identified by NASPAA and the program. For SLO2: Policy, SLO3: Analysis, and SLO4: Public Service, 100% of students indicated that the program helped improve their competency in these areas.

Assessment results for SLO5: Diversity are mixed. While survey results exceeded the established target, course project results fell below the target. These findings suggest an opportunity to further strengthen the integration of diversity and cultural competency throughout the curriculum. In particular, the program should continue to emphasize how organizations develop and implement diversity and cultural competency policies; how organizations can engage diverse stakeholders in culturally responsive ways; how governmental policies influence organizational approaches to diversity; and how public organizations can effectively communicate and engage with diverse audiences.

Students may understand how to identify diversity and cultural competency policies used by an organization, analyze how the organization engages diverse stakeholders in culturally responsive ways, and explain how governmental policies have influenced organizational approaches to diversity and cultural competency. However, they are not consistently applying and integrating these concepts into their coursework. These competencies are foundational to effective public administration, just as efficiency and effectiveness are, and student work should demonstrate the same level of attention and urgency in addressing them.

The gap between students’ reported confidence and demonstrated performance suggests that, while students perceive themselves as competent in these areas, additional opportunities are needed to help them translate that confidence into demonstrated application. The program should therefore continue to reinforce the practical application of diversity and cultural competency concepts across coursework and emphasize their central role in effective public administration practice.

Overall, the assessment results do not indicate a need for major curricular changes in these competency areas. Faculty will continue to monitor student performance and assessment results for SLO5: Diversity and will make targeted curricular adjustments as needed to strengthen student learning and ensure continued progress toward established program outcomes.

Appendix A: CMU Mission Statement with Competencies

Mission Statement

The mission of the Master of Public Administration program at Central Michigan University is to provide current and future practitioners with enriching learning experiences that advance their intellectual growth and increase the likelihood of respectful governance in a variety of public settings, characterized by accountable and ethical decision-making that engages stakeholders with effective leadership and management practices.

Public Service Values

To achieve our mission and realize our vision, the MPA program at Central Michigan University emphasizes the following NASPAA public service values:

Students and alumni from the MPA program at Central Michigan University will:

- Pursue the public interest with accountability and transparency
- Serve professionally with competence, efficiency, and objectivity
- Act ethically so as to uphold the public trust
- Promote participation and inclusiveness by demonstrating respect, equity, and fairness in dealings with members of society, stakeholders, and fellow public servants; and
- Cultivating global, regional, and local awareness.

Universal Competencies

To implement its Vision and Mission statements, the MPA program at Central Michigan University has adopted the following set of NASPAA required competencies in its curriculum.

Students in the MPA program at Central Michigan University will develop and enhance their ability:

- to lead and manage in the public interest
- to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process;
- to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment;
- to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective;
- to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large.

Mission Specific Competencies

In addition to the universal competencies from NASPAA, the program has adopted the following mission-based competency.

Students in the MPA program at Central Michigan University will develop and enhance their ability to distinguish effective public sector management from ineffective public sector management by interacting with experienced practitioners.

Appendix B: Revised MPA Competency Assessment (passed in the 2020-2021 academic year by the Public Administration Council).

Mission / Purpose

The mission of the Master of Public Administration program at Central Michigan University is to provide practitioners and pre-service students enriching learning experiences that prepare and advance their intellectual growth, ensure effective and accountable decision-making as they lead, manage, and serve in the public sector, and increase the likelihood of successful public governance via respect for citizens and clients in a variety of public service settings, from government organizations to nonprofit agencies and international bodies.

Goals

Goal #	Short Title	Description
1	NASPAA Competencies	MPA graduates will demonstrate knowledge of core concepts within the NASPAA required public service competencies.
2	Mission-Based Competencies	MPA graduates will develop knowledge of mission-based competencies emphasized by the CMU MPA program.
3	Professional Competencies	MPA graduates will apply public service competencies in their careers.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

SLO #	Short Title	Description	Goal(s) Supported	Measures Supported
1	Leadership	MPA graduates will develop the ability to lead in the public interest	1, 3	1, 7, 8
2	Policy	MPA graduates will develop the ability to contribute to the policy process	1, 3	2, 7, 8
3	Analysis	MPA graduates will produce analyses of data that solve organizational problems	1, 3	3, 7, 8
4	Public Service	MPA graduates will articulate a public service perspective in their work	1, 3	4, 7, 8

5	Diversity	MPA graduates will develop the ability to productively engage with diverse stakeholders	1, 3	5, 7, 8
6	Communication	MPA graduates will communicate in ways to enhance accountability to intersectoral stakeholders	2, 3	6, 7, 8

Measures and Targets

Measure #	Short Title	Description	SLO(s) Addressed
1	Capstone-Leadership	As part of their capstone project in PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will produce an innovation analysis paper for a public sector organization. Using data and evidence collected from the organization, the student's innovation analysis will generate recommendations that enhance the organization's management processes. The program's 'competency-based leadership rubric' will be used to assess this project for how effectively the student analyzes leadership successes and failures in the organization, and how well the student displays leadership tenets in the production of the project. The target for this measure is that 70% of students will score either 'superior' or 'above average' on all of the five performance indicators that comprise the leadership rubric.	1
2	Capstone-Policy	As part of their capstone project in PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will produce an innovation analysis paper for a public sector organization. Using data and evidence collected from the organization, the student's innovation analysis will generate recommendations that enhance	2

		the organization's management processes. The program's 'competency-based policy rubric' will be used to assess this project for how effectively the student emphasizes recommendations that can be used by organizational leaders to influence the policy process. The target for this measure is that 70% of students will score either 'superior' or 'above average' on all of the five performance indicators that comprise the policy rubric.	
3	Capstone-Analysis	As part of their capstone project in PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will produce an innovation analysis paper for a public sector organization. Using data and evidence collected from the organization, the student's innovation analysis will generate recommendations that enhance the organization's management processes. The program's 'competency-based analysis rubric' will be used to assess this project for how effectively the student integrated data analysis into their recommendations. The target for this measure is that 70% of students will score either 'superior' or 'above average' on all of the five performance indicators that comprise the analysis rubric.	3
4	Capstone-Public Service	As part of their capstone project in PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will produce an innovation analysis paper for a public sector organization. Using data and evidence collected from the organization, the student's innovation analysis will generate recommendations that enhance	4

		the organization's management processes. The program's 'public-service rubric' will be used to assess this project for how effectively the student integrated theories of public service. The target for this measure is that 70% of students will score either 'superior' or 'above average' on all of the five performance indicators that comprise the analysis rubric.	
5	Capstone-Diversity	As part of their capstone project in PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will produce an innovation analysis paper for a public sector organization. Using data and evidence collected from the organization, the student's innovation analysis will generate recommendations that enhance the organization's management processes. The program's 'diversity rubric' will be used to assess this project for how effectively the student integrated concepts of diversity and cultural competency. The target for this measure is that 70% of students will score either 'superior' or 'above average' on all of the five performance indicators that comprise the diversity rubric.	5
6	Capstone-Communication	As part of their capstone project in PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will produce a presentation based on their innovation analysis paper. The presentation should be communicated in ways that emphasize accountability to a diverse set of public stakeholders in the public and private sectors.	6

		The program's 'communication rubric' will be used to assess this presentation for how effectively the student communicates concepts and final recommendations in ways that help promote ideals of accountability to intersectoral audiences. The target for this measure is that 70% of students will score either 'superior' or 'above average' on all of the five performance indicators that comprise the communication rubric.	
7	Student Survey	In the capstone course, PAD 730 (which will become PAD 799 by Fall 22), students will complete a survey on MPA pedagogy and rate how effectively the program instructed them on public service competencies and mission-based competencies. The target for this measure is that 80% of students will rate the program as having instructed them effectively in all of the NASPAA and mission-based competencies (questions 1-6 on the student survey).	1-6
8	Alumni Survey	Three years after graduation, the program will administer a survey to MPA alumni to determine if they are applying public service competencies in their careers. The target for this measure is that 80% of alumni will have applied a majority of the competencies in their career (question 3 on the alumni survey).	1-6

Appendix C: Curriculum Map for the MPA Program

Required Courses	Student Learning Outcomes 1 Introduced; 2 Reinforced; 3 Emphasized (and Assessed)					
	Leadership	Policy	Analysis	Public Service	Diversity	Communication
PAD 610 Foundations of Public Administration	1	1		1	1	1
PAD 620 Nonprofit Administration	1	1		1	1	1
PAD 611/711 Public Personnel	2			2	2	
PAD 613/713 Public Budgeting & Finance			1	2		
PAD 614/714 Program Analysis & Evaluation		2	1			2
PAD 673/773 Administration & Ethics in Public Service	2			2		
PAD 673/775 Organization Theory & Behavior	2	2		2	2	2
PAD 680/780 Public Sector Research Methods			2	2		
PAD 799 Public Service Competencies (Capstone)	3	3	3	3	3	3

Appendix D: MPA Competency-Based Diversity Rubric

	Superior (4)	Above Average (3)	Average (2)	Below Average (1)	Unacceptable (0)
Diversity (D) Performance Indicators					
D1. Student identifies current diversity and cultural competency policies utilized by the organization under study					
D2. Student analyzes how the organization engages diverse stakeholders in culturally responsive ways					
D3. Student explains how governmental policies have influenced the organization's policies on diversity and cultural competency					
D4. Student produces a project that can be used to transform diversity and cultural competency policies in an organization					
D5. Student's written analysis is designed to engage a variety of diverse audiences					

Appendix E: Self-Assessment Survey Given at the End of the Capstone Course

2024-25 EXIT SURVEY SUMMARY DOCUMENT

Post-Program Assessment of Public Service Skills, Competencies, and Experiences

Question 1

In your opinion, how important are the following public service skills to being an effective public administrator? (check one box in each row)

	I don't know	Not important	Important	Very important
Leading and managing in the public interest				
Participating in, and contributing to, the policy process				
Analyzing, synthesizing, thinking critically, solving problems, and making evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment				
Articulating, applying, and advancing a public service perspective				
Communicating and interacting productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large				
Communicating in ways to enhance accountability and				

transparency to intersectoral stakeholders				
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Question 2

Please indicate the extent to which the MPA program helped you improve your ability to do each of the following. (check one box in each row)

	No Improvement	Small Improvement	Moderate Improvement	Substantial Improvement
Communicating Orally				
Communicating via Writing				
Presenting Individual or Group Projects				
Using Research Methods				
Making Strategic Decisions				
Engaging the Public and Stakeholders				
Understanding Ethical Implications of Decisions				
Budgeting and Managing Finances				
Planning Programs				

	No Improvement	Small Improvement	Moderate Improvement	Substantial Improvement
Linking Public Service Values to Practice				
Distinguishing effective public sector management from ineffective public management				
Applying Accountability and Transparency				
Evaluating Programs				
Applying Performance Systems to Management				
Implementing Ethical Policies and Programs				
Understanding Human Resource Issues				
Designing and Managing Intergovernmental and Intersectoral Collaborations				
Managing Data and Information Technology				

	No Improvement	Small Improvement	Moderate Improvement	Substantial Improvement
Understanding Legal Institutions and Processes				
Understanding Cultural Competency				
Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives				
Understanding Public and Non-profit Innovation				
Understanding Economic Institutions and Processes				

Question 3

During my time in the MPA program, the instructors (check one box in each row):

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Understood and respected individual students' differences					
Communicated clear expectations for classes					
Applied course content to real life, especially the workplace					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Used a variety of teaching methods and learning activities					
Encouraged students to be responsible for their own learning					
Helped students achieve course learning objectives					
Challenged students intellectually					
Encouraged students to summarize, synthesize, analyze and apply information					
Provided feedback to help students keep track of their learning					
Chose assessments of students' knowledge which were relevant to course learning objectives					
Discuss the importance of cultural competency in the public and non- profit sectors					
Included Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into curricular readings					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
and course assignments					
Linked Public Service Theory to Practice					