

Teaching Public Administration: Career Pathways Using the Academy Model

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Abstract

The paper and presentation will discuss developing a career pathway in public administration as has been done in technical fields. The paper will emphasize the development of the academy model, its recruiting strategies, projects conducted by the academy, and the student participation in Rhode Island ASPA.

NASPAA is currently developing career pathway initiatives for graduate students and recent graduates of MPA programs. Career pathways literature is relatively abundant. However, that literature focuses on pathways in technical areas such as computer engineering. The career pathways for police are also a frequent subject of the literature. Career pathways literature in public service is relatively limited and mainly about police work pathways. Public Administration pathways literature does not fully exist. Nonetheless, a model is underway currently in Rhode Island.

The Public Administration Academy of the Pawtucket, Rhode Island Public Schools is such a model. The Public Administration Academy is the only such academy listed by the United States Department of Education. The Academy is now 8 years old. Its students graduate at 98% while their peers graduate at 40%. This kind of success is an important factor in developing a career pathway in public administration. Additionally, the federal funding for the academy and all such academies or pathways now requires "industry" certification. The Pawtucket Public Schools possess the only Public Administration in the nation with such a certification. Importantly, the idea of a profession of public administration is imperative to the academy. Students in the academy are granted membership in ASPA at the annual Public Service conference and at two of these conferences the President of ASPA has been present to present the membership certificates. Membership is granted to students only after they have completed the Academy course assignments, visited the Roger Williams University campus where they are part of a class oriented Public Administration activity involving the use of the library. Further, Academy students have been given increasing responsibility at the Public Service week conference for substantive presentations.

Moreover, the theme of professionalism is reinforced by being affiliated with a 4 year degree granting institution. Traditionally, 4 year universities have been the location of professional career starting point. The beginning of the professional pathway for Academy students is the granting part based on the granting of course credit transferable to other institutions, should the Academy student not wish to attend Roger Williams University. The presentation at the Teaching Public Administration Conference will cover these and other aspects of PA Academy model.