A. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

What actions did you take in 2012-2013, based on previous assessment findings, to improve student learning in your program? (Refer back to plans indicated in “Response to Assessment Findings” in 2011-2012 Assessment Report.)

- During this first year on semesters, the MPA program assessed whether or not students mastered the basic concepts and skills concerning the political, social, technological, organizational, managerial, and economic environments of public or nonprofit administration. Resource constraints precluded our ability to conduct an employer survey and face-to-face exit interviews. However, an online exit survey was created and distributed to MPA students who graduated during 2012-2013 in lieu of the interviews. The survey was distributed two weeks after Spring Semester graduation. In addition, the MPA program underwent a transition in leadership effective at the end of August 2013 when Jerri Killian stepped down after 10 years as director of the program.

- The MPA faculty spent 2012-2013 developing new program competencies and learning outcomes for each of the core MPA courses. Program competencies and core course learning outcomes align with the new NASPAA (the external accrediting body for the MPA program) accreditation standards and the NCA assessment process.

B. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSED AND EXAMINED

Which Program Level Student Learning Outcomes did you assess and examine during 2012-2013? List the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes using the format of “Graduates will be able to _______________________."

- Students will possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to enter positions of responsibility and authority in the public or nonprofit sectors.
- Students who wish to pursue graduate programs of study will be sufficiently prepared for success in such programs.
- Students will possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, and values to serve as ethical professionals in our global society.

(Please note that due to specialized accreditation requirements, accredited programs may be required to assess and report on all program level student learning outcomes every year; accredited programs should report in a manner that will align with their accreditation. Programs not carrying specialized accreditation may assess all of their learning outcomes every year but may choose to report on 2-3 per year, looking at several years of data.)

C. METHODS FOR COLLECTING DATA

Which students were included in the assessment? (For example, all seniors completing Course X in Spring 2013, all graduating seniors, etc.)

- Data were gathered via course exit surveys, an alumni survey, student portfolios and internship reports, and an online survey of graduating MPA students. Assessments were completed by MPA students enrolled in core courses, graduating MPA students FY 2012-1013, and MPA alumni.
D. ASSESSMENT MEASURES

- What key assessments/assignments/student work did you examine to directly assess the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes listed above?

1. Program objectives were assessed via an Alumni Survey and Awards and Recognition Programs
2. Learning outcomes were assessed though Portfolio, Service Learning Evaluations, Course Exit Surveys and an online Exit Survey of MPA graduates. Resource constraints precluded our ability to conduct an employer survey and face-to-face exit interviews. An online exit survey was created and distributed to MPA students who graduated during 2012-2013 in lieu of the interviews. The survey was distributed two weeks after Spring semester graduation.

E. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

What did you find from your assessments? What did your data reveal about how well students are achieving the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes that you listed above?

Program Assessment

1. Local, State and National Awards and Recognition:
   - **Findings:**
     - Jackie Anderson was recognized as the Outstanding Student by the UAG department and COLA
     - Madeline Grisham was recognized as the Outstanding Student by the UAG department and SOGS
     - Dr. Darius Prior was recognized as the Outstanding Alumnus by the UAG department and COLA

2. Alumni Survey: A survey of alumni who graduated in 2006, 2007 and 2008 was conducted in the Fall 2014
   - **Significant and Relevant Findings:**
     - 90.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the MPA program prepared them for success in their profession
     - 95.2% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the MPA program was worth the time and cost
     - 95.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of instruction found in the MPA program
     - 95.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their advisor provided clear information about program requirements and expectations
     - 80.0% of the respondents work in a field related to public administration; with 70.0% of those respondents working in a position related to governmental administration and 10.0% working in the non-profit field.

Assessment of Learning Objectives

1. **Portfolios:** Consists of a sampling of materials (papers/examinations) from core MPA courses to demonstrate improvement over time for the stated learning outcomes. Upon completion of two core MPA courses (under semesters), a mandatory meeting with the student’s advisor shall be scheduled to review and discuss student progress. If warranted to promote satisfactory progress, an additional mandatory meeting shall be scheduled upon completion of four core MPA courses to review and discuss student performance at that time. Students may access their portfolio at any time during regular business hours.
   - **Findings:**
     - Faculty advisors met with MPA students who had completed four core MPA courses. Discussions included constructive feedback and helpful recommendations to enhance future student performance, refine students’ programs of study, and clarify students’ career goals in terms of their roles as managers in the public and nonprofit sectors.
     - Students continue to be granted access to their portfolios at any time during normal business hours.
2. **Course Exit Survey**: A quantitative survey shall be administered to students enrolled in the core MPA courses (URS 7000, 7010, 7020, 7030, 7040, 7050, 7060, 7070, and 7080/90) at the end of each semester to assess perceptions of the extent to which each of these courses and the MPA program to date, respectively, facilitates achievement of stated learning outcomes; a mean score of 2.0 or less (1 is best) on a 4-point scale shall be realized for each course.

- **Findings**:
  - A mean rating score of 1.53 was realized on MPA Exit Surveys, with a score of 1.58 pertaining to course-related learning outcomes and 1.47 for questions pertaining to the outcomes of the MPA program as a whole. These findings exceed the minimum acceptable standard set forth for these measures.

3. **Graduate Exit Survey**: (in lieu of qualitative exit interviews) The MPA program was unable to execute exit surveys due to resource constraints, however 2012-2013 graduates were invited to complete an online exit survey. Surveys were distributed two weeks after Spring 2013 graduation, which may account for a relatively low participation rate of only 50%.

- **Findings**:
  - Overall the results of the Graduate Exit Survey were generally favorable with ratings on the overall quality of instruction receiving an average rating of 1.9 on a 4-point scale (with 1 being best) and the quality of the curriculum in terms of enhancing students’ knowledge of public administration receiving a rating, on average, of 1.5 on a 4-point scale (with 1 being best). Average ratings on the quality of the curriculum in terms of enhancing students’ analytic, written and oral communication, and research skills were also good, with average ratings of 1.8, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.6, respectively. Areas within the curriculum identified by students as in need of improvement include balancing theory and practice, exposure to different technologies, and the need for a wider variety of elective courses (all received ratings, on average, from 2.4 to 2.5 on a 4-point scale). In response to graduate concerns and suggestions provided by alumni on the alumni survey, the MPA program is offering a more targeted range of electives, including courses in planning, project management, and social media.

4. **Internships**

- **Findings**:
  - Three MPA students completed 300-hour internships in AY 2012-2013. Average performance evaluation scores ranged from commendable (9 on a 12 point scale) to outstanding (12 on a 12 point scale). One of the internships resulted in fulltime job offer for the MPA intern.

F. **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

How were results shared? With whom were they discussed?

- The aggregate results of the course exit surveys for Fall 12 and Spring 13 semesters were shared and discussed by UAG faculty during regularly scheduled faculty meetings in Spring 13 and Fall 13, respectively. Course exit survey results for the academic year were shared and discussed with MPA Advisory Board members during the MPA Advisory Board meeting in Oct. 2013. Portfolio discussions between MPA advisors and first-year MPA students occurred during the first weeks of Spring Semester 2013. The results of the Alumni Survey and the online Graduate Exit Survey were shared and discussed during regularly scheduled faculty meetings in the Fall of 2013.
G. ACTIONS PLANNED TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

Based on what you learned from your assessment of the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes, what actions do the faculty in your program plan to take to improve student learning in your program/area? Describe the steps faculty have taken/will take to use information from the assessments for improvement of student performance and the program. List additional faculty meetings or discussions and planned or actual changes to curriculum, teaching methods, approaches, or services that are in response to the assessment findings.

- The MPA program will be conducting a self-study in 2014-2015 as part of the NASPAA reaccreditation process. The MPA faculty spent 2012-2013 developing new program level learning objectives and course specific learning outcomes for each of the core MPA courses. Program level objectives and core course learning outcomes align with the new NASPAA (the external accrediting body for the MPA program) accreditation standards and the NCA assessment process. In Fall of 2013 we began to measure core course learning outcomes and will continue to do so for all of the core courses during the 2013-2014 school year. The revised MPA program learning objectives are as follows:

1. Students will recognize the legal, political, institutional, and cultural environments of public and nonprofit service.
2. Students will understand the value of employing inclusive democratic processes with key stakeholders to inform decisions and solve problems
3. Students will apply critical thinking and appropriate analytic tools and techniques to inform decisions and solve problems
4. Students will seek to balance equity, economy, efficiency, and efficacy when making decisions and solving problems
5. Students will demonstrate and justify the importance of ethical responsibility in the public service professions
6. Students will communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, with a variety of audiences

H. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (recommended)

Please attach minutes of program faculty meeting where discussion of results and action planning occurred and any other relevant documents.