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# The MPA Curriculum and Nonprofit Job Based Competencies

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# Purpose of the Study

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- Using Mirabella's and Wish's (2000 & 2001) categorization of inside, outside, and boundary spanning functions, the study assesses and compares the curricula of 31 MPA program nonprofit concentrations/specialization to the stated job requirements of 33 nonprofit jobs advertised by Nonprofit Connect in the Kansas City area.
- The purposes of this administrative study is to determine if MPA programs are teaching students the balance of inside, outside, and boundary spanning functions needed to meet the job requirements of nonprofit positions in the current Kansas City nonprofit market.

# Background

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Salamon's (2005) call for programs the train “professional citizens.”

- Called for a new skill set which moves away from the internally focused POSDCORB to externally focused skills such as collaboration, negotiation, and the ability to engage, activate, operate, and sustain networks. (Salamon 2005).

# Mirabella's and Wish's Research

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## 2000 & 2001

**Outside Functions:** Activities that require interaction with stakeholders in the manager's environment.

- Philanthropy and Third Sector
- Advocacy, Public Policy and Community Organizing
- Fundraising, Marketing, and Public Relations

**Inside Functions:** Management within the Nonprofit Organization.

- Nonprofit management skills
- Financial management, finance, and accounting
- Human Resource Management

**Boundary Spanning:** Span internal and external skills.

- Strategic Planning
- Legal Issues
- Entrepreneurship

# Mirabella's and Wish's Research

## 2000 & 2001

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### Key findings:

- In their analysis of highly ranked MPA programs, there was an “overwhelming preponderance of ‘inside function’ courses among all degree programs” with 61% in MPA (2000, 226).
- Advocacy and community organizing were emphasized in MSW programs, but not others (2000, 227).
- Graduate MPA and MNO programs tended to be more balanced between outside and inside functions than programs offering MBAs or MSWs (2001, 36-38).
- Outside functions were still more focused on marketing and resource development instead of advocacy, public policy, and community organizing—which require more development (2001, 40).

# Method

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## Nonprofit courses

Using NASPAA's Civicor database

<http://naspaa.civicore.com/search/index.php?section=basic&action=new> generated a list of 135 programs self-identifying as having a nonprofit specialization/concentration in September 2016.

- Selected 45 programs and attempted to locate nonprofit concentration courses and competencies on their websites. Located 31 programs with data on their nonprofit courses on their website. So few programs had nonprofit competencies that only courses were used for evaluation.
- 252 courses for 31 nonprofit concentrations were analyzed to determine if they focused on external (outside), internal (inside) or boundary spanning functions, using Wish's and Mirabella's (2000 & 2001) categories as the basic framework.

# Method

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## Nonprofit Jobs

Using Nonprofit Connect's (<http://npconnect.org/>) Job Link, full-time nonprofit jobs in the Kansas City area at two separate points in time in September 2016 were identified.

- 70 positions were originally selected and evaluated, but the duties were evaluated for only 33 of the 70 positions. Positions were eliminated from the sample if they were specifically targeting healthcare (clinical, nursing, therapy, etc.), teaching, social work, clerical, accounting professionals, or if they were explicitly religious.
- The position duties were analyzed to determine if they focused on external (outside), internal (inside) or boundary spanning functions, using Wish's and Mirabella's (2000 & 2001) categories as the basic framework. The evaluator used natural breaks in the job descriptions to identify each duty—e.g. individual sentences, breaks with commas, etc.

|  | <b>Inside (W &amp; M)<br/>/Internal</b>   | <b>Outside (W &amp; M)<br/>/External</b>  | <b>Boundary Spanning (W &amp; M)</b>  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Wish's and Mirabella's<br/>Classifications in their Curricular<br/>Model for Nonprofits (2000 &amp; 2001)</b> | Nonprofit management skills<br>Financial management, finance, and<br>accounting<br>Human Resource Management  | Philanthropy and Third Sector<br>Advocacy,<br>Public Policy and Community<br>Organizing<br>Fundraising, Marketing, and Public<br>Relations  | Strategic Planning<br>Legal Issues<br>Entrepreneurship                                  |
| <b>Nonprofit Courses/Course Themes</b>   | Nonprofit Organizations<br>Nonprofit Administration<br>Nonprofit Sector<br>Financial Management<br>Budgets for Nonprofits<br>Management IT<br>HR Management<br>Nonprofit Theory<br>Program Evaluation<br>Project Management   | Grant Development and Writing<br>Fundraising Philanthropy<br>Volunteer Management<br>Advocacy<br>Policy and Public Issues<br>Citizen Participation<br>Community Organizing<br>Social Responsibility or Social<br>Entrepreneurship<br>Marketing<br>Privatization and Contracting<br>Economic Development   | Strategic Management or Planning<br>Ethics<br>Nonprofit Law<br>Leadership<br>Governance |
| <b>Duties or key words from Nonprofit<br/>Positions</b>  | Develop and oversee programs.<br>Supervise others or direct staff.<br>Plan<br>Coordinate<br>Administer policies and procedures.<br><br>Manage databases and systems.<br>Produce reports.<br>Manage budget.<br>Ensure financial stability.<br>Quality enhancement and quality<br>management.<br>Review and evaluate within the<br>organization.<br>Project Management. | Fundraise.<br>Donor stewardship.<br>Recruit and manage volunteers.<br>Facilitate advocacy.<br>Serve as spokesperson.<br>Serve as a liaison.<br><br>Conduct outreach, work with<br>stakeholders.<br>Coalition building.<br>Build relationships.<br>Coordinate consumer input.<br>Capacity building.<br>Develop policy.<br>Provide member services.<br>Promote awareness of the<br>organization.<br>Maintain external communications. | Strategic development.<br>Establish credibility.<br>Leadership                          |



# Limitations & Criticisms

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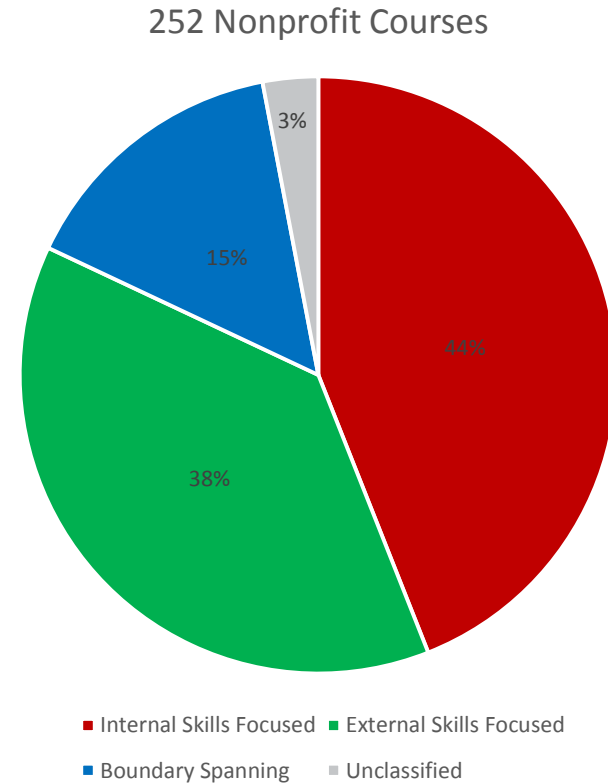
- Administrative exercise.
- Small sample size without systematic sampling.
- Exclusive reliance on website data that is often unreliable.
- The classification of inside/outside/boundary spanning may not accurately reflect the applicability of some skills to both internal and external environments. For e.g., Cantrell-Bruce and Blankenberger (2015) have shown that leadership, collaboration, capacity, and innovation skills have both internal and external relevance.

# Results

## Nonprofit Courses

Of the 252 courses:

- 112 or 44% of the courses were internal skills courses
- 96 or 38% of the courses were external skills courses
- 37 or 15% of the courses were boundary spanning courses
- 7 or 3% of the courses were unclassified



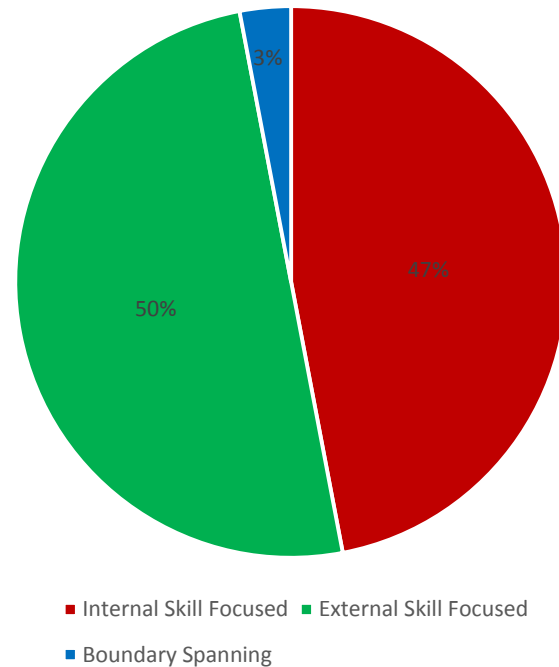
# Results

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## Nonprofit Job Requirements

- Of the 350 job requirements analyzed.
  - 164 or 47% were classified as internal skills.
  - 177 or 50% were classified as external skills.
  - 9 or 3% were classified as boundary spanning skills.

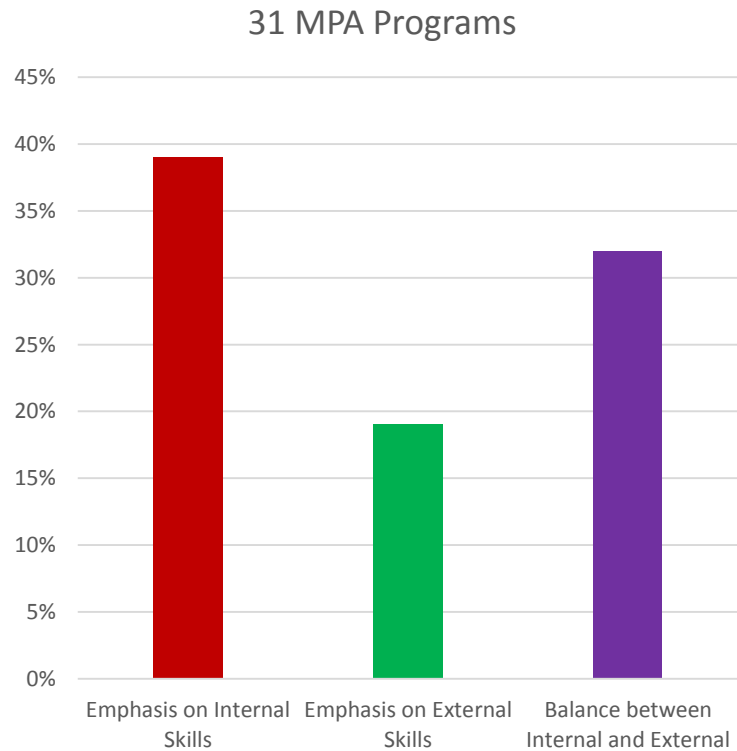
350 Nonprofit Job Requirements



# Results

## Nonprofit Concentrations/Emphasis

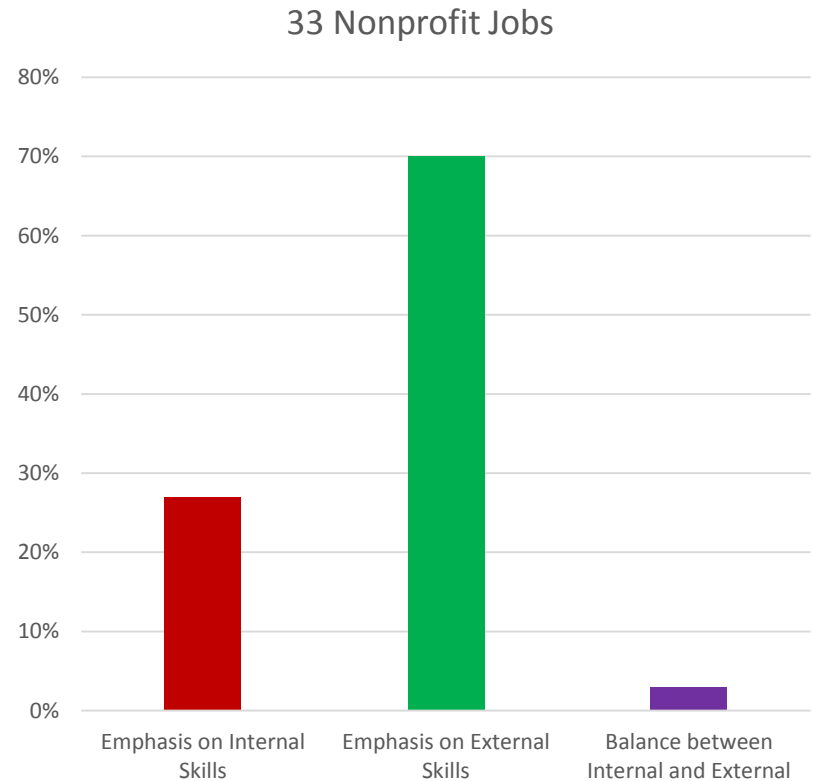
- Of the 31 programs with nonprofit concentrations:
  - 12 or 39% placed more emphasis on internal skills based on the number of courses. In other words, out the nonprofit courses evaluated by program, these programs had a higher percentage of internal skill courses.
  - 9 or 19% placed more emphasis on external skills based on the number of courses. In other words, out of the nonprofit courses evaluated by program, these programs had a higher percentage of external skills courses.
  - 10 or 32% had a balance between internal and external skills courses based on the number of courses.
  - 7 or 23% of the programs had no external skills courses.



# Results

## Nonprofit Jobs

- Of the 33 nonprofit jobs.
  - 9 or 27% placed more emphasis on internal skills based on the number of job requirements. In other words, out of all of the job requirements in the job description, a higher percentage focused on internal skills.
  - 23 or 70% placed more emphasis on external skills based on the number of job requirements. In other words, out of the job requirement in the job description, a higher percentage focused on external skills.
  - 1 or 3% has a balance between internal and external skills based on the number of job requirements.
  - 4 or 12% of the jobs had only internal skills.
  - 3 or 9% of the jobs had only external skills.



# Reflections

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- The majority of nonprofit concentrations/specialization areas in the study place more emphasis on internal skills, but many have a balance of internal and external skills.
- The nonprofit jobs in the Kansas City area under review placed more emphasis on external skills.
- Nonprofit concentrations external skills courses emphasize fundraising, grant writing, marketing and communications.
  - 42% of the nonprofit jobs reviewed were positions that emphasized the resource development and communications skills set.

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