NOTE: This Portfolio is being used a sample with permission from the student, whose name has been omitted. The original portfolio was submitted in a 3-ring binder, with appropriate dividers for each section and appendices. (Some of the original page numbering or formatting may have been altered during the conversion to a .pdf file.)

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PORTFOLIO

6/29/05

Approved by:____

Date:____

A Portfolio submitted as partial completion of the requirements for the Master of Public Administration, SUNY Brockport.

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Introduction

I applied to the Public Administration program at SUNY Brockport because Public Administration brings together non-profit organizations and communication, two areas that have formed the foundation of my life and work. To date, I have devoted my career to volunteer management and advising prospective students. Now, with a variety of relevant experiences to draw upon, my objective is to work as an administrator in a college setting.

As I reflect on what I have learned in my career thus far I am drawn to the point that I have been a participant in an organization and am now ready to be a leader. I want to be able to make improvements in the organization as an active leader. The MPA program has been the catalyst for this change from participant to leader.

I have chosen to complete the portfolio as the culmination of my MPA degree because of the conscious reflection involved in compiling and integrating my coursework. This portfolio will serve me well as I move on to the next stage of my career.

In August I will be moving to the Kansas City area. I feel confident that with my varied work experience, my MPA coursework, and this portfolio I will be able to find a satisfying position. This program has given me the confidence through knowledge and experience to become a leader.

1.11 Knowledge of Political Environments

Intergovernmental Relations (PAD 683) offered the opportunity for me to evaluate public policies and laws from the local, state and federal levels. In order to glean a true picture of any issue I learned that it is essential to gather facts from all of the stakeholders.

Many issues overlap branches and levels of government. Within those branches and levels of government stakeholders may interpret a situation differently. This was the core of the PAD 683 paper, “Who’s Law is it Anyway?”.

The court case that I focused on was Virginia V. Black. This case addressed whether a state has the right to ban a form of expression. In this case the form of expression was cross burning.

This case took place in Virginia in 1998. This state has a cross burning statute 18.2-423 that bans all cross burning with the intent to intimidate.

The U.S. Supreme Court found that banning cross burning with the intent to intimidate falls under a state’s rights. The Supreme Court did not agree that burning of a cross was prima facie evidence of intent to intimidate.

The fact that the U.S. Supreme Court could not agree on this law further demonstrates the complexity of the issues surrounding freedom of expression. Many other stakeholder groups had a variety of views on the case as well.

Some groups were concerned about the legal precedent this case will set. Others felt that irregardless of the intent cross burning cannot be allowed. Still others were concerned about singling out one type of expression over many other types of expression to ban.

The one constant with the debate over freedom of expression is that it will continue to be defined and debated. Government levels and stakeholders will be adding their views along the way to influence the direction of future debate.

One insight that I have gained from Intergovernmental Relations has been the fact that the debate over citizen's rights often enters into a gray area. For example, the Case of Virginia V. Black contained two separate issues. One was whether a state has the right to ban cross burning. The second is whether cross burning represents the intent to intimidate. Even at the U.S. Supreme Court level there was a great deal of disagreement on the gray area of this case.

In my future administrator positions I will be more aware of the subtle gray areas and be certain I am gathering all the possible facts to clarify issues. I will utilize my valuable research skills that I gained as a result of PAD 683 to research and clarify facts on a variety of issues.

Secondly, I will be more cognizant of the stakeholders surrounding an issue. In conducting the literature review with the paper, "Who's Law is it Anyway?", it was surprising how many perspectives existed on this one issue. Often it is too easy to assume people are interpreting things as you are In my future positions I will be deliberate in gathering the perspectives of all the stakeholders.

Finally, I have gained an overall knowledge of the legal process from Intergovernmental Relations. I learned how this law went from being a state statute to being appealed to moving all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In my current admissions position I have to work with intergovernmental issues through my interactions with financial aid and SUNY. I am more aware of the system as a whole now as a result of Intergovernmental Relations.

In the future I plan to be more attuned to stakeholders and the complexities involved with all levels of government working together. I feel that I am better able to be a liaison between the levels with the background that I have gained.

1.12 Knowledge of Social Environments

The key aphorism that I learned in Public Policy (PAD 680) was, "if you try to please everybody, somebody's not going to like it". This statement demonstrates the complexity of operating in a social environment.

In my reflective analysis for Public Policy I addressed the issues surrounding social environments through the context of my work at Genesee Community College (GCC). One population that we often work with is convicted felons. If a student marks that they have been convicted of a felony on their application they are treated differently. The applicant is interviewed by the director of admissions and then a committee determines if it is appropriate for the student to be accepted to GCC.

In this paper I examined the possibility of requiring a background check on all GCC applicants due to the fact that in some cases people lie about convicted felonies on their application. I analyzed this policy change through stakeholder analysis, cost-benefit analysis, ethical analysis, equity analysis and the rational planning model.

Stakeholder analysis evaluates who is invested in the issue. In the case of background checks the stakeholders include: students, admissions staff, convicted felon applicants, taxpayers, and the college administration to name a few. Once these parties have been pinpointed it is necessary to evaluate who will be glad and who will be mad as a result of the policy

Cost-benefit analysis identifies a program's beneficial outcomes with its costs to produce those outcomes. Costs may include lawsuits and lost students. On the other end benefits might include prevention of future crime and students feeling safer. If the costs outweigh the benefits of the program or policy it is necessary to rethink the policy.

Ethics should also play into any policy decision. For example, in terms of fairness it might be necessary to ask if it is fair to ask all students for permission to conduct a background check. In addition it is necessary to ask if it is ethical to spend taxpayer's money to ensure the safety of students and staff. These are only two examples of many questions that should be asked in an ethical analysis of the background check issue.

Another analysis tool is equity analysis. This asks how do you determine if those paying for the program are benefiting from it? Many stakeholders are paying for the background check program in a variety of ways. If those paying for the program oppose the program, implementation could be compromised.

Finally, the rational planning model can be utilized in a policy decision. In this model the problem of felons falling though the cracks would be identified as a crisis. The alternative solutions would be identified. The option of background checks would be chosen and implemented. Finally an evaluation of the program would be developed.

One insight that I have gained regarding social environments has been the importance of stakeholder analysis. It is essential to gain the full picture of any policy issue. Every issue has winners and losers. For example, while safety may be gained with the background check policy it will add more work to already overworked staff.

A second insight that I have gained is that in implementing policies there are always unintended consequences. As a result implementation is the most difficult stage of a policy. An example of an unintended consequence could be decreased enrollment at GCC due to the fear of background checks.

A third insight that I have gained is that incremental change often is most effective in social environments. For example, random background checks could be conducted with the overall goal of increased campus safety. This would bring many of the positives of a full background check program without adding as much cost.

In my future administration role I plan to utilize the lessons of how to successfully implement policies in a complex social environment. I plan to use multiple models to analyze a situation and always remember that policies are implemented in concert with the stakeholders involved.

1.31 Negotiating Skills

I learned many valuable lessons in Human Resource Management (PAD 685). One common thread among these lessons was negotiation. In our final exam we were given several scenarios and asked to respond to them.

One scenario involved a supervisor who was not satisfied with the draft of a plan written by a recreation specialist. In the scenario the supervisor made several mistakes in negotiating with the recreation specialist.

The first mistake was the overall negative tone taken with the employee. The supervisor made broad generalizations about the employee's abilities.

The second mistake was the vague manner of the comments the supervisor made. The supervisor failed to set expectations and follow through with the employee.

Finally the supervisor did not close the negotiations with the recreation specialist on how the plan is to be revised. The recreation specialist is left with no direction and only frustration.

The feedback discussion model would serve as the model I would utilize to negotiate with the recreation specialist in the situation. First, I would set a positive climate. Then I would identify the problem with the employee and communicate the desired outcomes. Following this step I would agree with the employee on the course of action. This would involve a two-way negotiation. Finally, I would follow up by measuring results and recognizing the recreation specialist.

Human Resource Management taught me many negotiation lessons. First, I will remember to resist the temptation to be negative right away with an employee. It is always important to look at your own behavior as a supervisor rather than instantly looking at the employee’s shortcomings.

The second negotiation lesson that I have learned has been the feedback discussion model. Feedback is the first step in successfully negotiating with the employee. The employee does not automatically think like the supervisor and without feedback the employee lacks direction.

Finally I have learned that measuring staff results will aid me in my role as administrator. To effectively negotiate with staff it is important to reward them for a job well done. This is only possible when the administrator is measuring results.

I have already used many of these lessons in my time as acting director of the admissions office at Genesee Community College. I was put into the role of supervising the staff and continuing the goals and objectives of our office.

Negotiation was at the root of my role because I was in the role of director for a defined period of time. I had to maintain staff motivation and ensure that all tasks were being completed. I accomplished this through feedback and a positive attitude.

In my future administration roles I plan to remain aware of how I negotiate with staff. I will utilize tools such as the feedback model to accomplish effective staff negotiations.

1.32 Team Building Skills

In each job that I have held I have been a part of a team. As I transition to a leadership role my team building skills will become more essential.

In Supervision Skills (PAD 644) I learned a lot about my natural tendencies and how through awareness I can strengthen my skills as a team leader. In the final paper for the course I reflected on the key areas covered in the course.

In the area of communication the class completed a communication style survey. This survey revealed that I am a feeler style of communicator. I am consistent in this style in both favorable and stressful situations.

The strengths of this style include sensitivity to others, being perceptive, and being a team player. The weaknesses include being emotional, subjective, and over reactive. In order for me to offer the most to a team I need to remain aware of these natural weaknesses in my communication style.

Another survey that we conducted in Supervision Skills was the listening style assessment. According to this survey I am an active listener. This means that I have a tendency to be empathetic, listen for words and feelings, and give verbal and non-verbal responses. These strengths will serve me well in a team building role.

In the area of conflict management we conducted the conflict style survey. According to this survey my behavioral tendency is toward avoiding or accommodating. Avoiding behavior is uncooperative and unassertive while accommodating behavior is cooperative yet unassertive. Neither of these styles produces a win-win result.

Performance Management is a scientific, data-based, systematic, and conscious way to improve performance. Consequences are at the root of the system. There are four types of consequences for behavior. Which are: positive reinforcement, extinction, discipline and negative reinforcement.

I learned that my natural strengths will serve me well with the performance management system. I am good at reading people and this will aid me in delivering positive reinforcement at the appropriate time.

Finally the Leadership Behavior Analysis II survey revealed that my natural tendency is to be a “feel good leader”. This fits with the supporting style of leadership. While this may help me build a team it will not serve me well in all situations.

Situational leadership demonstrates that there is no one way to lead. Each of the four leadership styles: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating have their place. When I am building a team I will have to remember that each of these styles can be used effectively in the appropriate situation.

I gained many insights in terms of team building from Supervision skills. First, in terms of communication I have to be aware of my natural tendency to be defensive. As a feeler style I am now more cognizant of this tendency and will make efforts to minimize this reaction.

For example, in a difficult situation I will watch my body language for defensive messages and in my communication I will speak with “I” terms. I can also use my active listening strengths to minimize my natural defensiveness.

Secondly, in terms of conflict I will work toward win-win situations. In the past I have always thought of conflict in terms of a winner and a loser. Now I realize that conflict can be healthy especially if it results in a win-win solution.

In order to get to a win-win situation I will have to work on being more assertive. For example, I will have to be more proactive in finding out what the other party wants while still holding to what I want in a situation. In the past I have been more likely to give in to the other party.

When I was acting director of admissions in 2002 I had not yet taken Supervision Skills. At that time I was not prepared to serve in my new found role. I let some of the staff dictate the direction of the office and I was therefore a figurehead without really holding the role of director. If I were in this position now I would use the win-win technique much more.

Finally, I have learned a great deal about situational leadership. This will help me significantly in team building. I will now be able to meet an employee at their stage and help them to become the most effective member of the team. The final result of situational leadership is delegation. I will be able to create an empowered team by working toward this goal.

I feel well prepared to move forward in the area of team building. I have tools such as performance management, situational leadership, active listening and conflict management to aid me in my future administration roles. I will keep my notes from Supervision Skills close at hand for situations which may arise.

1.41 Planning Skills

In Strategic Management (PAD 681) I learned how to use planning in order to strategize future efforts of any organization I work for. The research paper that I wrote during Strategic Management included several helpful planning exercises. The Porter Competitive Strategy exercise allowed me to analyze my current workplace, Genesee Community College (GCC).

I found that the GCC admissions office falls in the broad and low cost quadrants of the table. GCC is not differentiated in its offerings and is strongly a low cost college. GCC is broad due to the variety of majors offered.

For example, GCC offers degrees for transferring to a four year college or degrees for working immediately after completion of the associates degree. In addition the college has an open admission policy, meaning nearly anyone is accepted to the college.

GCC is low cost because the cost of attendance is lower than most of its competitors. I am confident that the college will always maintain this strategy in order to offer the opportunity of a college education to the greatest number of people possible.

In the future GCC will remain competitive through on-line courses, increasing the majors offered and offering more courses at the branch campus sites. All of these strategies will make college more convenient for busy people.

Another exercise that I conducted was the rational planning model. This model provides a framework for understanding the planning process. The first step of this model is to identify the problem.

In the case of Genesee Community College the problem is maintaining and increasing enrollment. With the problem identified there are opportunities to be pursued.

In the college's case the opportunities include creating new programs for in demand professions. Another opportunity is the current lay-offs occurring in our area.

The second step is to design solutions. In the case of GCC one solution would be to become broader while remaining low cost. This could be achieved through offering more majors and increasing enrollment. Another alternative would be to become narrower and remain low cost.

In the third step the alternatives are compared and evaluated. Due to the fact that GCC is an open admissions institution, it is broad by its very design. Therefore it is essential for GCC to remain broad in the majors that it offers. It is not wise for GCC to become narrower because that would not meet the needs of its students.

The fourth step is to work on a plan for implementing the alternative that was selected. This is the time for setting a mission statement and goals associated with the mission. For example, a goal could be to begin a new health care major at GCC that can be completed with night courses.

Finally, step five is the stage for feedback. This is the time to collect data on the goals set. For example, a survey could be sent out to GCC students about the majors that the college offers and their level of satisfaction with the offerings.

Through the lessons learned in Strategic Management I have several insights related to organizational planning that apply to my current work. First, competitive strategy is essential in order to stay ahead in any organization. In order to strategize it is first necessary to understand where your organization lies in relation to the competition. It is necessary to recognize what makes your organization unique and capitalize on those aspects. For example, GCC's low tuition sets it apart from many colleges.

Secondly, the rational planning model is a tool that can move an organization though the change necessary to remain competitive. For example, each year at GCC we hold a Student Services retreat where we discuss enrollment and retention threats. Now that I am familiar with the rational planning model I am better able to counteract those threats.

Finally, I have learned that non-profits have to think and plan like businesses in many ways to remain competitive. Just like a business who does not listen to its customer can go out of business a non-profit can become obsolete without planning and listening to its customer. At GCC the college has many advisory boards in order to remain in touch with the “real world”.

In my future role as an administrator I will implement the planning models that I gained from Strategic Management. In addition I will plan my own career through setting career and learning goals. By putting the goals in writing and continuing to evaluate my progress I will be closer to reaching the overall organization’s potential as well as my own.

1.42 Decision Making Skills

An administrator is faced with making decisions on a daily if not hourly basis. Each decision greatly impacts the employees working under the administrator. There are many methods for making these important decisions impacting the organization.

In Budget State and Local (PAD 684) we learned several budget styles that aid in making decisions regarding a public agency. One such method is the zero based budget.

The zero based budget requires departments to prepare decision packages that represent various service levels. The levels are then ranked and are merged into one concise ranked list. Funding is distributed in the order of the list ranking until the money has been depleted.

The zero based budget that we worked on in Budget State and Local was for the Adams County Library System. The decision units within the library system included the Acquisitions Department, Cataloging Department, Circulation Department, Reference Department and Special Programs.

Within each unit three packages were developed. The first package represents the base cost. Packages two and three represent the additional incremental costs associated with adding services and resources.

The true decision making occurs after the packages have been established. At this point the Adams County Library Decision Package Ranking System is compiled. Since there are fifteen total packages, they were ranked one through fifteen based on priority. The cumulative cost is tabulated and the cut off point is designated between ten and eleven. This line represents the point where programs must be cut in order to maintain the budget.

The administrator has a great tool in the zero based budget. It allows for logical decision making that is equitable. I have gained several insights through learning about this decision making technique.

First, I have learned that it is important to involve all decision units in setting their decision packages. For example, the Reference Department would set the base cost for a certain number of questions answered. Then two increments of additional questions answered are set.

In the case of my current position the Admission office would be a Decision Unit. We would have a base cost for college programs we attended and then incremental costs for additional college programs we could attend.

Secondly, I have learned that decentralizing the budget decision making process forces all parties to closely analyze their areas. Each of the decision units has to form and rank their own decision packages. This forces each area to closely evaluate their function.

In the case of the library the special programs department has to look at their primary function of providing special programs. They have to determine how many programs are a baseline and how many more constitute an incremental increase. This process forces the department to be critical of their role.

Finally, I have gained insight in the ranking process. It is a very logical process of starting with the baseline and then adding in the incremental packages. Through this process bias and subjectivity are minimized. This has a great deal of influence on how the employees and the public perceive the decision process in the end.

In my future role as an administrator I will use the zero based budget as a decision making tool. I will remember to seek input from the decision units and allow them the opportunity to designate their base and incremental costs. With this input I will be able to make an ethical decision package ranking which will lead to the greatest possible efficiency in the organization.

1.44 Evaluation Skills

Evaluation is more essential in the public sector than anywhere in the private sector. The public sector is accountable to taxpayers and clients in order to justify its very existence.

In Research and Program Evaluation (PAD 688) I gained many techniques for evaluating a program or agency. In this course we used the Hickok Center for Brain Injury as our model agency.

One assignment in this course was to develop a survey that measured family member satisfaction with the service being provided for their loved one with a brain injury.

The first step in this assignment was to establish goals for the survey. I set four goals for my survey. First, to determine if the family feels the center's activities have met their family member's needs. Second, to determine if the family is satisfied with the changes they have noticed in the family member since their participation at the Hickok Center. Third, to determine if the family is satisfied with their level of integration in the family member's involvement at the center. Fourth, to determine how satisfied the family is with the staff and volunteers support to the family member.

Then I suggested questions to ask the family members to achieve the four goals that were set for the survey. I varied the styles of the questions in order to make the survey more convenient for the family members to complete.

I developed questions using the Likert Scale for example. This scale asks questions with a scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". I also asked open ended questions to give the family the chance to give their opinion in a sentence format.

I gained insight in several areas during the course of Research and Program Evaluation. First, I learned that in order to have a successful survey you must begin by developing measurable goals. If goals are developed then logical questions will follow. The survey will come full circle when you get the responses back and they meet the goals that you set.

In my position at Genesee Community College we often send out surveys to evaluate programs that we run. We have never set goals for these surveys and we have therefore not had direction for the questions asked in the survey. After what I have learned in Research and Program Evaluation I will be evaluating the entire process of the program surveys in my office.

Secondly I have learned that the questions asked on the evaluation should tie in with the goals set. Each question should logically match one of the goals. For example, the question "I feel that the staff and volunteers at the Hickok Center are supportive and helpful to my family member" using the Likert Scale matches the goal "to determine how satisfied the family is with staff and volunteer's support to the family member". The goals and questions must be closely matched to determine if the survey was effective.

Finally, I have learned that the survey must be designed from the user's perspective. It is boring to fill out a survey where all the questions are in the same format. The question style should be varied to maintain the interest of the person completing it.

In addition the education and cognitive level of the person filling out the survey must be considered. It is important to meet the respondent at their level to maintain the reliability and validity of the responses.

I will remember these lessons learned in the future as I evaluate and justify programs that I work with. In my role as administrator I will always be conscious of the need to justify, educate and measure any agency or program I work with. By maintaining this mindset I hope never to be in a position where a program I work with is deemed obsolete.

1.52 Facility in Analyzing and Using Information

Statistics for Managers (PAD 687) offered plenty of opportunity to analyze and use information. In the course we learned a variety of methods for analyzing data. We put this knowledge to test in our final exam project.

In this project we were asked to apply our knowledge to a fictitious town called Metroburg. This town had various government departments and a variety of data collected related to those departments.

I chose to focus on race and police attitudes in Metroburg. I first tested the null hypothesis that African-Americans and non African-Americans in Metroburg ranked police attitudes the same. I used a Two-Independent-Samples T Test to test the null hypothesis. This test proved that African Americans are much more dissatisfied with police attitudes in Metroburg.

I then examined the variable of contact with police for African-American citizens. To examine this variable I used the Mann-Whitney test to examine the null hypothesis that for African-Americans the ranking of police attitudes was the same for people who had contact with police and those who did not. Based on this test I could reject the null hypothesis and I determined that people who had no contact with police were more dissatisfied than people who had police contact.

Following this I looked at police attitude by sex for African-Americans. I used the One-Way Analysis of Variance to test the null hypothesis that for African Americans in Metroburg both males and females ranked police attitudes equally. Based on the results of the test I could not reject the null hypothesis.

Finally I looked at neighborhood and police attitude ranking. I found that African-American citizens in certain neighborhoods were very dissatisfied with police attitudes.

I gleaned several lessons regarding analyzing and using information. I learned that it is important to start with a hypothesis and a null hypothesis when analyzing data. If you are looking at data with no direction it is easy to get lost in the numbers. When a hypothesis is tested many statistical tests can be utilized.

Secondly, I learned that wording in a report on data is important. The report should be written with the reader in mind. It is important to add a combination of charts and paragraphs to break up the report for the reader. In addition if the report is written for the general public it will be written differently than if it is an internal report.

Finally, when analyzing and using information it is essential to suggest action steps from the information analyzed. For example in the case of Metroburg and the attitudes toward police it will be important for the City Council members to address why the African Americans in certain neighborhoods are dissatisfied with police attitudes. They may want to implement focus groups to gather this information.

In my future role as an administrator I will remain conscious of these lessons learned. I have often been intimidated by data in the past. After completing Statistics for Managers I have learned what a powerful tool data can be in setting priorities in the public sector. I plan to use data with confidence in the future.

1.53 Personal Presentation Skills

Through my career thus far I have done a significant amount of public speaking. In my position with the Girl Scouts as a Membership Specialist I was in charge of recruiting adult volunteers. This required that I speak to groups of potential volunteers. In my position at Genesee Community College as an Admissions Advisor I speak on a regular basis at Open House and Friday Visit programs.

While I have always been relatively comfortable with public speaking I have not always put a lot of planning into it. In Organizational Behavior (PAD 682) I systematically prepared and delivered a speech to the class about Volunteer Management and Motivating Volunteers.

The title of my speech was, “Volunteer Management-What Motivates Volunteers”. I felt that I had a solid background in this subject due to my position with the Girl Scouts of Genesee Valley as a Membership Specialist.

In the introduction portion of my speech I explained my connection to the topic and the importance of motivating volunteers. I then moved into the analysis portion of the speech.

I explained McClelland’s Needs Theory. This theory states that people are primarily motivated by one of three needs. The first is need for achievement. These people want to accomplish goals and show competence. Second are people with the need for affiliation. People with this primary need want social interaction, love and affection. Finally people who have a need for power want control over other’s work.

It is important to note that although one need for a person may be dominant, it is not typically the only need that motivates a person. In addition a person’s primary need may change over time making it important for a volunteer manager to remain attuned to their volunteers.

I then discussed how a volunteer manager can evaluate which need their volunteer is motivated by. They can observe what the person says and how they act. Based on this information the volunteer manager can find appropriate jobs within the organization for that volunteer.

For example, if a person is motivated by affiliation the volunteer manager would assign that volunteer to a training function. If a volunteer is motivated by achievement the volunteer manager would assign that volunteer to an administration duty.

Then I explained implications for volunteer managers. I stated that volunteer managers needed to be conscious of McClelland's Needs Theory in order to motivate volunteers. I described four steps that they could take in this process.

The first step is to survey and assess the volunteer. The second step is to connect the volunteer to the appropriate job. The third step is to reassess the volunteer to ensure that their needs have not changed because no volunteer has only one motivator. Finally the manager should evaluate themselves relative to how they lead the volunteers.

I concluded with several handouts for the class. One handout was a description of the types of needs under McClelland's Needs Theory. The second handout was a survey that volunteer managers could use to assess their volunteers and determine which need most strongly motivates that volunteer.

My presentation was video taped and I went home and watched the presentation. I had several observations regarding my strengths and future improvement of my presentation style. I felt that my strengths included my introduction, my eye contact and the application of theory to volunteer management. My weaknesses were the timing of my overheads, the pace of my presentation and some nervous movements.

I gained several insights from this presentation. First, I learned that it is important to practice the presentation even more than you think is necessary. I had practiced my presentation however I felt that the timing of the overheads was off because I was too distracted with what I was saying. If I had practiced more I would not have had as much difficulty with the coordination of everything.

Secondly, I learned that it is important to integrate the handouts into the presentation as much as possible. This helps the audience realize that the handouts will be helpful in their future work.

Finally, I have realized that even when something is a strength for you it is still important to evaluate yourself for strengths and weaknesses. Due to the fact that the material I was speaking about was new to me I had more difficulty with this presentation than I might about something related to my day to day job.

In the future I plan to start writing my presentations as early as possible and practice them several times in order to feel comfortable with the coordination of the presentation. I will always do a self assessment after the presentation to evaluate what went well and what did not. With this technique I will continue to be more at ease with public speaking.

1.62 Membership in a Professional Organization

I am currently an Admissions Advisor at Genesee Community College (GCC). My position includes many duties related to attracting students to GCC. Each fall I spend about one month traveling around the Rochester area visiting high schools to recruit students to attend the college.

During this month I travel with a consortium of colleges called RAC (Rochester Area Colleges). As a group we set the order and schedule of high schools to visit. We also plan other joint recruitment events and host a breakfast conference event each fall to kick off our travel month.

The chair position is rotated through the colleges and in 2003 GCC was due to be in the chair role. My director assigned the duty to me for the year. I was somewhat overwhelmed with the assignment since I had seen other colleges utilize their Director of Admissions in the role of RAC Chair.

I then decided that this was a leadership opportunity for me and a chance to apply much of what I have learned in my coursework during the Public Administration program. I could never have anticipated the challenges I would face in the course of my year as chair.

It started with the travel season in the fall. The season seemed to go well. The schools are always happy to have thirteen Rochester Area Colleges visit at the same time. The colleges are happy to have contact with large groups of Juniors and Seniors at each school.

Then the crisis occurred. At the conclusion of the travel season I was contacted by SUNY Geneseo's Director of Admissions. She explained that her college no longer saw traveling with the Rochester Area Colleges as productive in their recruitment efforts and therefore planned to withdraw from the consortium.

At the next RAC meeting that I ran as chair I explained that Geneseo planned to withdraw from RAC. This led to a panic among the remaining twelve colleges. In fact one other member of the consortium, Nazareth College, also decided to withdraw its membership from RAC.

In the long run I felt that this crisis was healthy for the organization. As chair I initiated a new subcommittee within the organization. It was named SOS and was charged with looking at how to make the organization more effective for the colleges and high schools.

The SOS committee held some town meetings to hear from the high schools on how things could be improved from their angle. Many of the school counselors were upset that two of the colleges had backed out of the consortium. On the other hand they were motivated to not lose all of the RAC colleges. They therefore were interested in making our visits to their high schools as productive as possible.

By the end of my year as chair I felt proud that I was able to bring RAC through this crisis and help develop a stronger organization as a result. I felt that many of the courses that I had already taken in the Public Administration program aided me at various points in my role as chair.

I gained several insights from the experience as RAC Chair. First, I learned that I should not be afraid of a new leadership role. I had been intimidated because I felt that the predecessors in the chair role were all in higher positions at their respective colleges. It became clear to me during the course of the year that my supervisor knew I could handle the role and that is why she assigned it to me.

Secondly, in the leadership role as RAC Chair I learned a lot about my leadership style. I was complemented by my colleagues for not getting too emotional during the course of the two colleges withdrawing from the organization. I allowed all parties to express their opinions during our meetings and did not try to jump to conclusions about what direction the organization should take.

Finally, I learned that sometimes it is a benefit to bring in someone with a new perspective to chair an organization with a lot of history and baggage. Due to the fact that I did not know all of the past problems I was able to remain more neutral as the member colleges discussed issues. I could look at many perspectives in a more objective manner since I was not aware of all of the history.

In the future I will be ready to step into leadership roles with more confidence. I know that I can handle a crisis situation and even help the organization to become better as a result of a crisis. I have a new perception of my leadership capabilities thanks to a push from my Director of Admissions who knew I would succeed all along.