NASPAA Annual Accreditation Data Report

2014-2015

Prepared by Meng Li
August 2016

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Introduction

As the global standard in public service education, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) operates a mission- and outcomes-based accreditation process driven by public service values[1]. The NASPAA Accreditation Standards ensure programs establish observable goals and outcomes, collect data on program performance, and use information about their performance to guide continuous program improvement.

This is the fifth year NASPAA presents an analysis of aggregated data detailing program performance, student outcomes, and developments in the public service education field. This year's report is presented in two parts – a Snapshot of Accredited Programs in Academic Year (AY) 2014-2015 and Trends and Insights. It includes information about program features, faculty governance and instruction, student recruitment, graduation and employment, and overall accreditation conformance. The subjects of the analysis are the 192 accredited programs on the 2014-15 Roster of Accredited Programs and an additional 3 programs who sought accreditation during 2015-16. Data in this report – academic year (AY) 2014-15 data – are provided by programs and collected by NASPAA in self-study reports, accreditation maintenance reports, and annual program surveys.[2]

Key findings of this report include the following:

- 45 percent of known AY 2013-2014 graduates were employed across all levels of government.
- Nonprofit management continues to be an integral part of public service education, with concentrations related to the nonprofit field presenting as the most prevalent concentration and the nonprofit sector the single biggest employer of graduates.
- Programs are diversifying the modes of delivery and concentrations available for students.
- NASPAA Accreditation Standards on faculty and student diversity remain some of the most highly monitored.

---

[1] "Public service values are important and enduring beliefs, ideals and principles shared by members of a community about what is good and desirable and what is not…NASPAA expects an accreditable program to define the boundaries of the public service values it emphasizes, be they procedural or substantive, as the basis for distinguishing itself from other professional degree programs." NASPAA. (2015, November 5). *Self Study Instructions.* Retrieved July 16, 2016, from NASPAA Accreditation: https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/ssi-instructions-2015-update-final.pdf
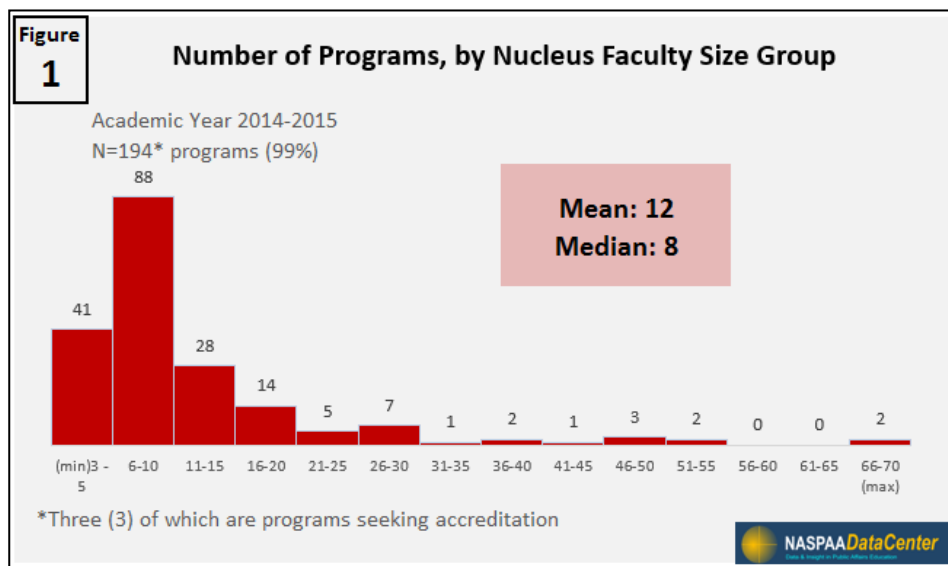
[2] While self-study reports and accreditation maintenance reports are required of accredited programs, the annual program survey is a voluntary, NASPAA-wide initiative. As such, survey-based data presented throughout the report may not be representative of the entire population of accredited programs.

1. A Snapshot of Accredited Programs

1.1 Faculty Governance & Instructions

NASPAA accredited programs are expected to be supported by an adequate faculty nucleus. NASPAA Accreditation Standard (Standard, hereafter) 2 stresses the importance of mission-based administrative capacity and faculty governance. Programs are required to demonstrate that their faculty nucleus – a minimum of five faculty members – participate in, and have influence over, the program.

In AY 2014-2015, the vast majority of programs had an adequate faculty nucleus exercising substantial determining influence over the program, with most accredited programs representing small- to medium-sized programs. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the nucleus faculty size of 194 programs. **Over 97 percent of programs have at least five nucleus faculty members, with the majority of faculty nuclei engaging between 5 and 10 members.**

The sufficiency of the faculty nucleus is also demonstrated by evidence that students are being taught by qualified, full-time faculty.[3] 94 percent of programs guaranteed at least 50 percent of all courses were taught by full-time faculty, and 97 percent ensured the same for courses delivering required competencies (Figure 2).

---
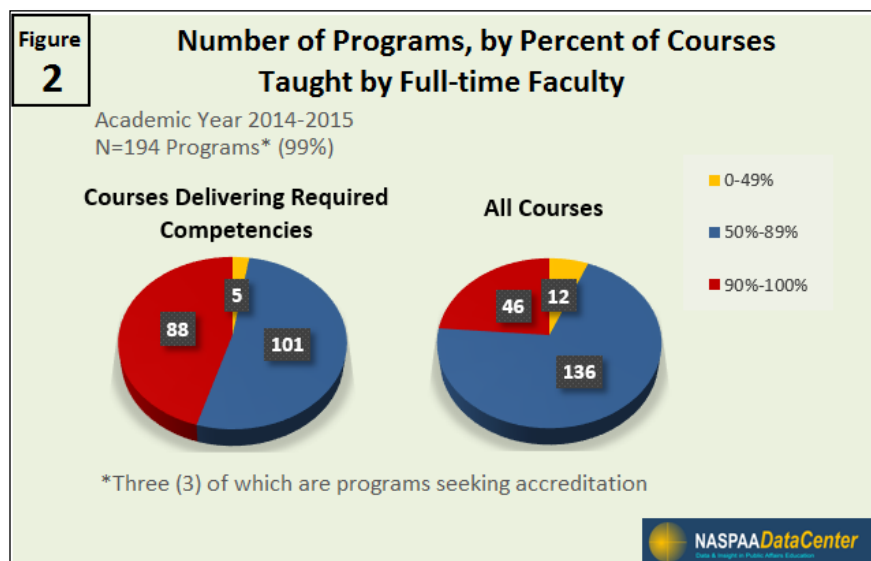
[3] COPRA accepts as evidence that students are being taught by an adequate faculty nucleus if at least 50 percent of both courses delivering required competencies and all courses are taught by full-time faculty NASPAA. (2015, November 5). *Self Study Instructions* (Page 44). Retrieved July 16, 2016, from NASPAA Accreditation: https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/ssi-instructions-2015-update-final.pdf

1.2 Student Recruitment & Admission

Standards 4.1 & 4.2 require programs to employ mission-based student recruitment and admission practices. Specifically, programs should recruit and admit a diverse array of students who show the potential to successfully complete the program.

The overall AY 2014-2015 admission and enrollment rates were 64 percent and 59 percent, respectively. Figure 3 shows the total, mean, and median number of applicants, admitted students, and enrollments of 193 programs. In AY 2014-2015, there were 29,799 applicants, with an average of 155 applicants per program. [4] Among these applicants, 19,707 (64 percent) were admitted and 11,299 (59 percent) of those admitted enrolled. Given the high average numbers, it is
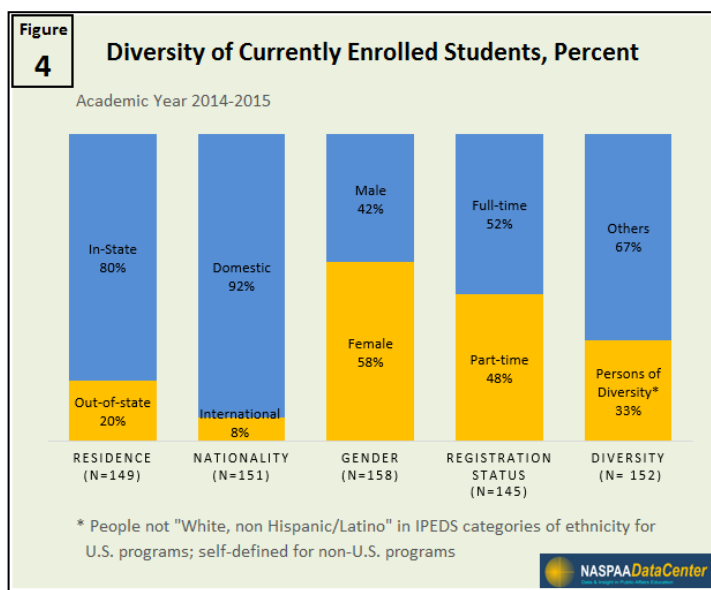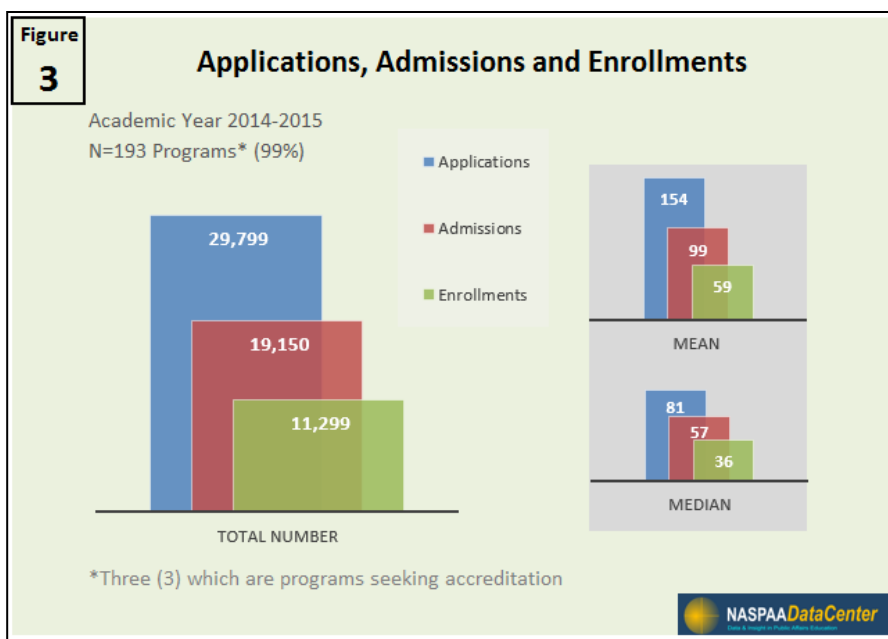

Figure 3

Applications, Admissions and Enrollments

Academic Year 2014-2015
N=193 Programs* (99%)

- Applications
- Admissions
- Enrollments

29,799
19,150
11,299

TOTAL NUMBER

154
99
59
MEAN

81
57
36
MEDIAN

*Three (3) which are programs seeking accreditation

NASPAA*DataCenter*

likely several exceptionally large programs with large applicant pools positively skewed the distribution.

In addition to promoting diversity in recruitment and admissions, COPRA stresses diversity and inclusiveness across programs, as programs prepare students for the professional workplace in a globalized community (Standard 4.4). Figures 4 and 5 depict student diversity based on voluntarily reported data. In AY 2014-2015, an average of 33 percent of currently enrolled students and were persons of diversity. [5] On average 20 percent of currently enrolled students are from out of state, 8 percent are international students, there are more female students than

Figure 4

Diversity of Currently Enrolled Students, Percent

Academic Year 2014-2015

| In-State 80% | Domestic 92% | Male 42% | Full-time 52% | Others 67% |
| Out-of-state 20% | International 8% | Female 58% | Part-time 48% | Persons of Diversity* 33% |

RESIDENCE (N=149) | NATIONALITY (N=151) | GENDER (N=158) | REGISTRATION STATUS (N=145) | DIVERSITY (N= 152)

* People not "White, non Hispanic/Latino" in IPEDS categories of ethnicity for U.S. programs; self-defined for non-U.S. programs

NASPAA*DataCenter*

---

[4] It is likely that the applicant and admissions data include the double-counting of students, as students often apply, and are accepted to, more than one graduate program.

[5] Persons of diversity include students under IPEDS categories of ethnicity other than "White, non-Hispanic/Latino" for US programs, and self-identified identities for non-U.S. programs. "Others" indicates non-Hispanic/Latino White for U.S.-based programs, and racial or ethnic majority groups for non-U.S. programs. The definition of "out-of-state" student could also be adjusted specific to the contexts for non-U.S. programs. [Institute of Education Sciences. (n.d.). *Collecting Race and Ethnicity Data from Students and Staff Using the New Categories*. Retrieved August 1, 2016, from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Section/collecting_re]

male, and 48 percent are part-time students (Figure 4).

Among the admitted students of accredited programs, students of diversity represented 31 percent, while international students and out-of-state students represented 13 percent and 24 percent, respectively (Figure 5). As with the all application and admissions data, these data are likely duplicating students who applied and were admitted to multiple programs, but enrolled in only one program. Despite this over-counting, the data show programs' diversity efforts in their admission processes.

Figure 5

Diversity of Admitted Students, Percent

Academic Year 2014-2015

In-State 76% | Domestic 87% | Male 44% | Others 69%
Out-of-state 24% | International 13% | Female 56% | Persons of Diversity 31%

Residency (N= 130) | Nationality (N=135) | Gender (N=136) | Diversity (N=126)

* People not "White, non Hispanic/Latino" in IPEDS categories of ethnicity for U.S. programs; self-defined for non-U.S. programs

NASPAA*DataCenter*

While these samples are not a complete picture of all accredited programs, the potential to increase the proportion of persons of diversity is significant. In 2015, the US Census Bureau reported 61.6 percent non-Hispanic or Latino white population[6], or more than 38 percent of the population can be defined as "Persons of Diversity". Considering that the data presented in this report indicate that, potentially with double-counting as students can apply and be admitted to multiple programs, only 31 percent of admitted students were persons of diversity, there certainly exists the potential for programs to promote diversity within recruitment and admissions, and ultimately, the student body.
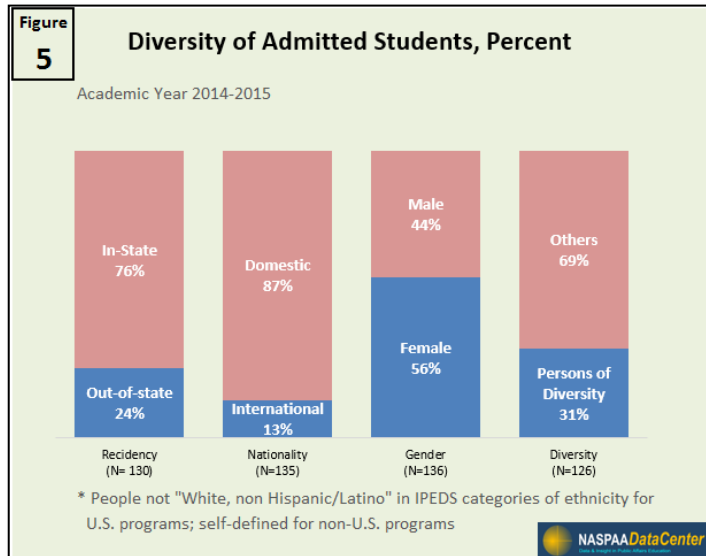
1.3 Student Graduation and Employment

Standard 4.3 requires that programs provide adequate support for student degree advancement and career success. In addition to discussion related to student advising and internships, COPRA seeks evidence that students persist to graduation and that employment outcomes align with program mission and goals.

Graduation Rates

NASPAA disaggregates graduation rates by the amount of time a student takes to graduate in relation to the program's self-identified program length. Figure 6 depicts the non-cumulative graduation statistics of 9,986 students from 175 programs. It shows 79 percent of students who entered the program 5 years prior to the annual report year[7] graduated: 57 percent of students within 100 percent program length, an additional 16 percent within 150 percent of program length, and a final 6 percent within 200 percent of program length. The remaining 21 percent are either still enrolled in the program or have exited the program without graduating.

Allowing programs to self-define their typical time-to-degree obstructs the analysis of these numbers and makes cross-program comparisons difficult. For instance, the 200 percent of program length

---

[6] United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Quick Facts*, Retrieved August 12, 2016, from United States Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00
[7] ARY-5 Cohort, 2009-10 matriculating class.

timeframe varies from approximately 2-6 years, depending on the program, clouding attempts to examine field-wide trends.

Figure 6

Graduation Rates of Students Enrolled in ARY-5 Cohort

Academic Year 2014-2015
N= 9,986 Students; 175 Programs* (90%)

- Graduate 100% of Degree Program Length**
- Graduate 150% of Degree Program Length**
- Graduate 200% of Degree Program Length**
- Still in the program OR Have exited program

57%
21%
16%
6%

* Three (3) of which are programs seeking accreditation
** Program length is self-identified by individual programs

NASPAA*DataCenter*

Job Placement

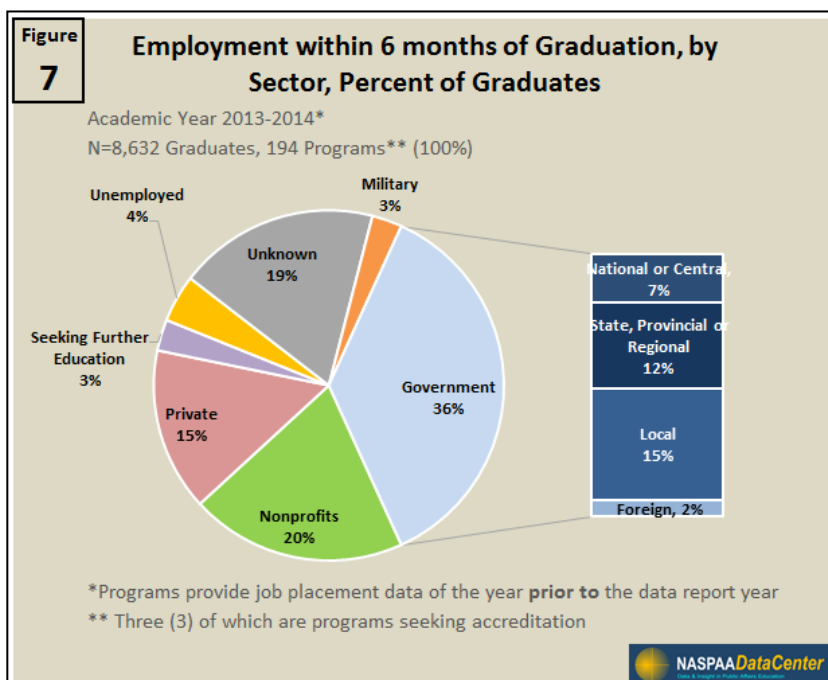To measure one of the most critical outcomes of accredited programs – careers in public policy, affairs, and administration – employment data of alumni are collected and analyzed annually. Accredited programs provide job placement data for students after six months of graduation (graduates of AY 2013-2014 in Figure 7, below).

Figure 7

Employment within 6 months of Graduation, by Sector, Percent of Graduates

Academic Year 2013-2014*
N=8,632 Graduates, 194 Programs** (100%)

Unemployed 4%
Military 3%
Unknown 19%
National or Central 7%
State, Provincial or Regional 12%
Seeking Further Education 3%
Government 36%
Local 15%
Private 15%
Foreign, 2%
Nonprofits 20%

*Programs provide job placement data of the year **prior to** the data report year
** Three (3) of which are programs seeking accreditation

NASPAA*DataCenter*

Of the 8,632 AY 2013-2014 graduates from 194 programs, **36 percent were employed within 6 months of graduation across all levels of government, 20 percent in the nonprofit sector, 15 percent in the private sector, and another 3 percent were seeking further education.**

While government remains the largest collective employer of graduates, the nonprofit sector is the largest single employer. As an integral part of public service, the nonprofit sector continuously presents as a significant employer of public service degree
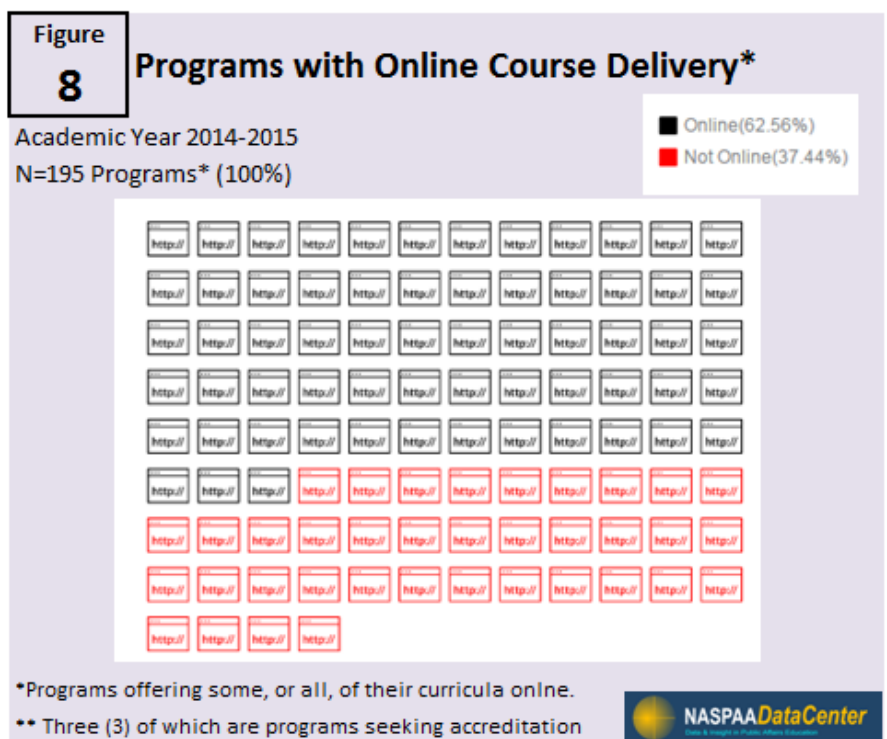
graduates. Within the ever-growing nonprofit sector, and due to the prevalence of public-private partnerships, graduates are able to carry public service competencies into all sectors of work. The wide disbursement of graduates signals that public affairs master's degree programs train future public servants not only for government-based careers, but also for careers in the nonprofit and private sectors.

While it is encouraging that on the whole AY 2013-14 graduates appear to be finding employment in public service-related fields, this year programs were also unable to report, on average, the employment statuses of 19 percent of graduates. Employment rates not only provide programs with a data point critical to evaluating mission-based success, but are an important program-wide indicator for both internal and external stakeholders. With approximately one-fifth of graduates unaccounted for, employment outcomes are likely biased, making it difficult for individual programs, or the field as a whole, to articulate the impact of graduates on the public affairs field across years or definitively present an unemployment rate.

1.4 Program Features

Mode of Delivery

In AY 2014-15, **63 percent of accredited programs reported having online components**, including programs with online courses available, programs available completely online, and programs offering options to complete the degree wholly in-person or online (Figure 8). While the data do not indicate explicit reasons behind this diversification, enhancing the modes of delivery has likely enabled programs to provide educational training without geographic restrictions, boost enrollment, and increase student access.

Figure 8: Programs with Online Course Delivery*

Academic Year 2014-2015
N=195 Programs* (100%)

Online(62.56%)
Not Online(37.44%)

*Programs offering some, or all, of their curricula online.
** Three (3) of which are programs seeking accreditation

NASPAA*DataCenter*

Concentrations

As shown in Figure 9, below, accredited programs offer a variety of concentrations[8] to students, with the most popular concentrations related to Nonprofit and General/Public Management. **In AY 2014-**

---

[8] 24 options are: None, Budgeting/ Finance, City/ Local, Criminal Justice, Economic Development, Education, Emergency, Environment, General/ Public Management, Health, Homeland/ National Security, Human Resources, Information Technology, International/ Global, Leadership, Nonprofit, Organizational Management, Public Policy Analysis, Public Sector, Social Policy, State, Survey Methods, Urban, Other (Please specify). NASPAA (2015). *Annual Data Report*. Retrieved August 12, 2016, from NASPAA Data Center: http://naspaa.org/DataCenter/index.asp

2015, 60 percent of programs provided a concentration related to nonprofit management and more than 50 percent of programs provided a general/public management concentration. 40 percent of programs offer concentrations outside the 24 options on which NASPAA collects data, which adds diversity to the specializations offered by accredited programs.

The prevalence of the nonprofit concentration signals a high demand for nonprofit leadership and skills. Considering the employment data shown above, this demand is not only prevalent among employers, but public affairs students, as well.
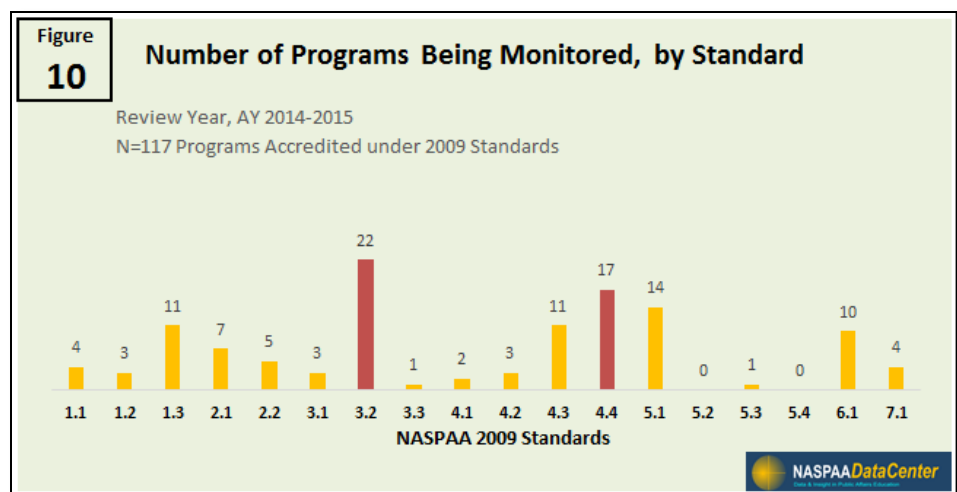

Figure 9

Frequency, Concentrations

Nonprofit	60%
General/Public Management	51%
Other	41%
Public Policy Analysis	38%
City/Local	38%
Health	32%
Budgeting/Finance	26%
Environment	22%
Urban	21%
International/Global	21%
Human Resources	20%

N=174 Programs (89%)
Academic Year 2014-2015

NASPAA*DataCenter*
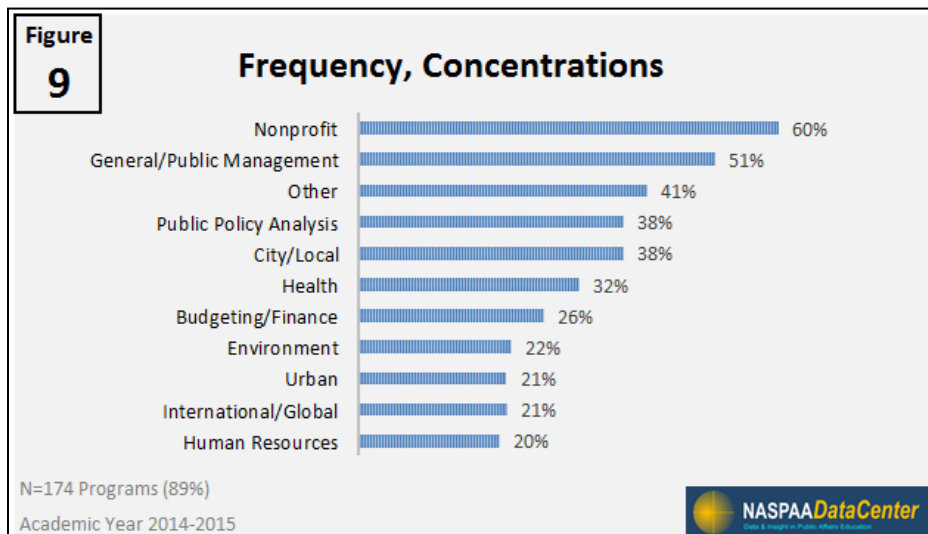
1.5 Standards Monitored

While all accredited programs are deemed in substantial conformity with NASPAA Standards at the time of a positive decision, some programs are subject to monitoring provisions to continue the dialogue about a specific area of program delivery. Responding to monitoring provisions detailed in Decision Letters and continuing the process of evaluation, programs submit Annual Accreditation Maintenance

Reports each fall for an annual review by COPRA. COPRA monitors progress of programs as they engage in continuous improvement, and once a program has shown significant progress on a specified area, the monitoring is removed (typically after 3 maintenance reports[9]).

Figure 10

Number of Programs Being Monitored, by Standard

Review Year, AY 2014-2015
N=117 Programs Accredited under 2009 Standards

Standard	Count
1.1	4
1.2	3
1.3	11
2.1	7
2.2	5
3.1	3
3.2	22
3.3	1
4.1	2
4.2	3
4.3	11
4.4	17
5.1	14
5.2	0
5.3	1
5.4	0
6.1	10
7.1	4

NASPAA 2009 Standards

NASPAA*DataCenter*

---

[9] "Programs being monitored on specific accreditation standards will have the monitoring provisions removed after the third completed annual report, unless the Commission (COPRA) determines the program has not yet addressed the concerns outlined in the program's most recent decision letter." COPRA. July 8 2016. *Peer Review and Accreditation Policy and*
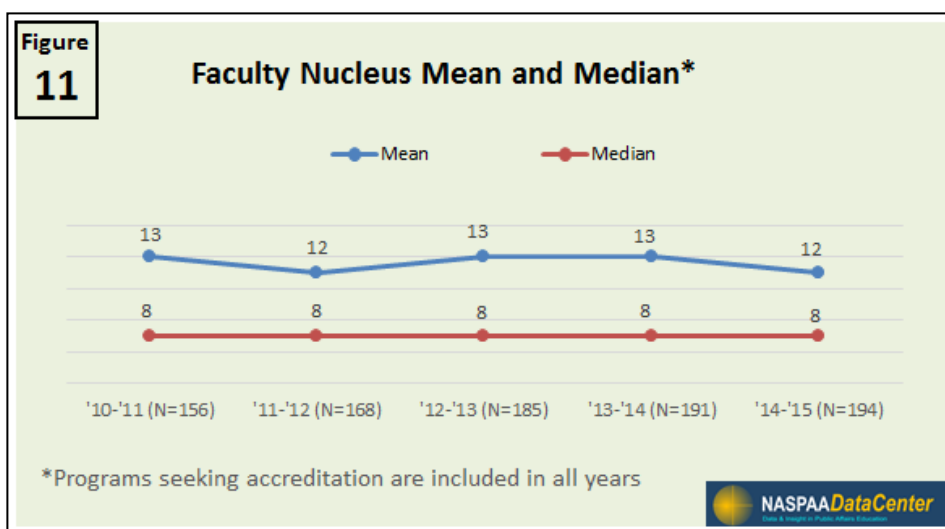
After the review of 2015 annual accreditation maintenance reports (data year 2014-2015), Standard 3.2 (Faculty Diversity) and Standard 4.4 (Student Diversity) were most commonly monitored standards. The sample in Figure 10 includes 117 programs accredited under the 2009 Standards. Among them, 19 percent continue to be monitored on Standard 3.2 and 15 percent are monitored on Standard 4.4. As the student admissions data also indicated, promoting diversity and fostering a climate of inclusiveness across the faculty and student body proves an opportunity for programs.

2. Trends and Insights

While it is useful to study the growth of accredited programs in a single year, it is also important to consider each year in the context of trends in the field. This section aggregates data from previous data reports to present trends since AY 2010-2011, interesting deviations in AY 2014-2015, as well as general insights. Key factor areas include nucleus faculty size, courses taught by full-time faculty, student applications, admissions, and enrollment, and graduate employment by sector. This section will not only compare different samples across time, but also incorporate same-sample trend analysis to control for COPRA policy changes and the specific development of NASPAA accredited programs.

2.1 Faculty

Accredited programs report a stable nucleus faculty size across all years. Figure 11 shows the multi-year analysis of the mean and median size of faculty nuclei from AY 2010-2011 to 2014-2015. Both indicators show general stability, even as new programs are added to the sample each year.

Figure 11

Faculty Nucleus Mean and Median*

— Mean   — Median

	'10-'11 (N=156)	'11-'12 (N=168)	'12-'13 (N=185)	'13-'14 (N=191)	'14-'15 (N=194)
Mean	13	12	13	13	12
Median	8	8	8	8	8

*Programs seeking accreditation are included in all years

NASPAA*DataCenter*

A multi-year analysis of faculty instructional data strengthens the conclusion that NASPAA accredited programs ensure an adequate faculty nucleus over time. Figure 12 shows the stability of the average percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty from AY 2010-2011 to AY 2014-2015. After a slight drop of both indicators in AY 2011-2012, the average percentages stabilized at around 84 percent for courses delivering required competencies and 76 percent for all courses. Even accounting for the drop in 2011-12, the engagement of faculty in instruction far exceeds the 50 percent threshold normally
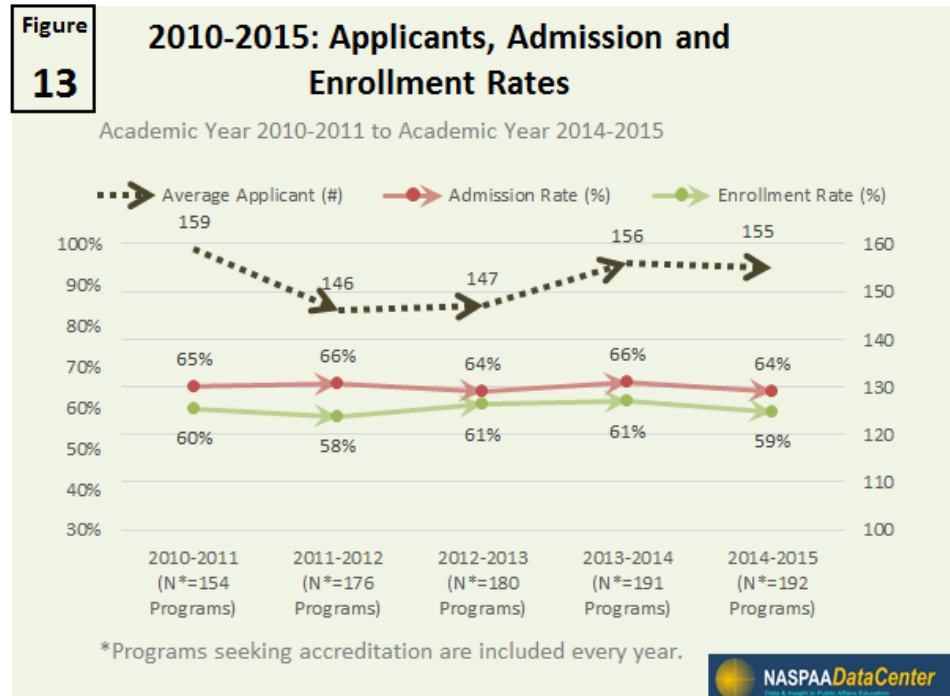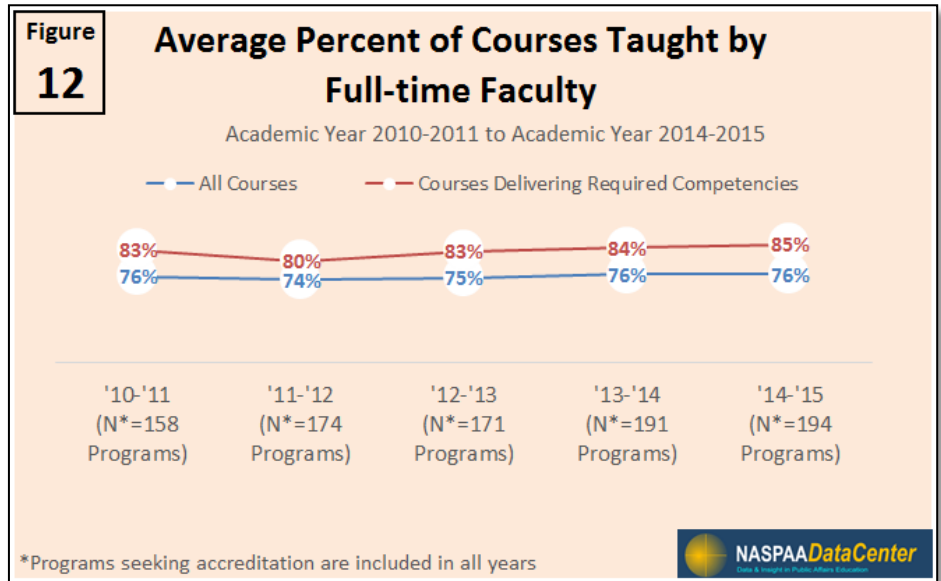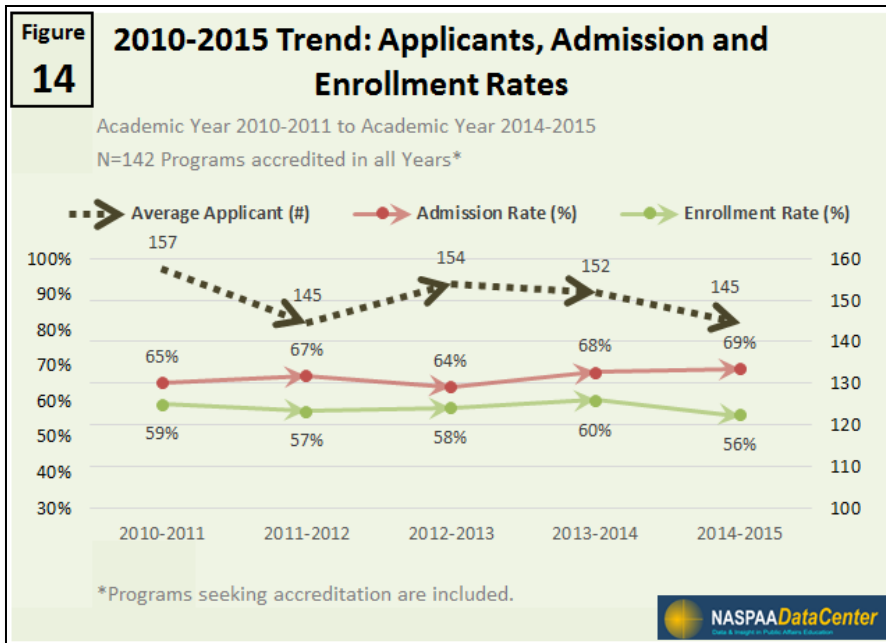
expected by COPRA. Controlling for the same sample across the past three data years also presents a consistent trend. Given the consistency of the data above, NASPAA accreditation and faculty-based expectations may play a role in helping accredited programs maintain faculty stability.

2.2 Applications, Admissions and Enrollments

Student recruitment data over 5 years suggest stability in average admission and enrollment rates, varying slightly as the sample changes. Despite a slight drop of both admission and enrollment rates, overall numbers have remained fairly stable, both near 65 percent and 60 percent, respectively, over time (Figure 13).

Holding the sample constant (Figure 14), the number of applicants varies, even as programs maintain a generally stable yield. The trend analysis shows the influence of external factors on student enrollment, likely including the impact of a stronger U.S. economy and job market, which weakens the incentive to attend graduate school.

Figure 12: Average Percent of Courses Taught by Full-time Faculty — Academic Year 2010-2011 to Academic Year 2014-2015

All Courses; Courses Delivering Required Competencies

	'10-'11 (N*=158 Programs)	'11-'12 (N*=174 Programs)	'12-'13 (N*=171 Programs)	'13-'14 (N*=191 Programs)	'14-'15 (N*=194 Programs)
Courses Delivering Required Competencies	83%	80%	83%	84%	85%
All Courses	76%	74%	75%	76%	76%

*Programs seeking accreditation are included in all years

Figure 13: 2010-2015: Applicants, Admission and Enrollment Rates — Academic Year 2010-2011 to Academic Year 2014-2015

Average Applicant (#); Admission Rate (%); Enrollment Rate (%)

	2010-2011 (N*=154 Programs)	2011-2012 (N*=176 Programs)	2012-2013 (N*=180 Programs)	2013-2014 (N*=191 Programs)	2014-2015 (N*=192 Programs)
Average Applicant (#)	159	146	147	156	155
Admission Rate (%)	65%	66%	64%	66%	64%
Enrollment Rate (%)	60%	58%	61%	61%	59%

*Programs seeking accreditation are included every year.

Figure 14

2010-2015 Trend: Applicants, Admission and Enrollment Rates

Academic Year 2010-2011 to Academic Year 2014-2015

N=142 Programs accredited in all Years*

Legend: Average Applicant (#) — Admission Rate (%) — Enrollment Rate (%)

*Programs seeking accreditation are included.

NASPAA*DataCenter*

2.3 Job Placement

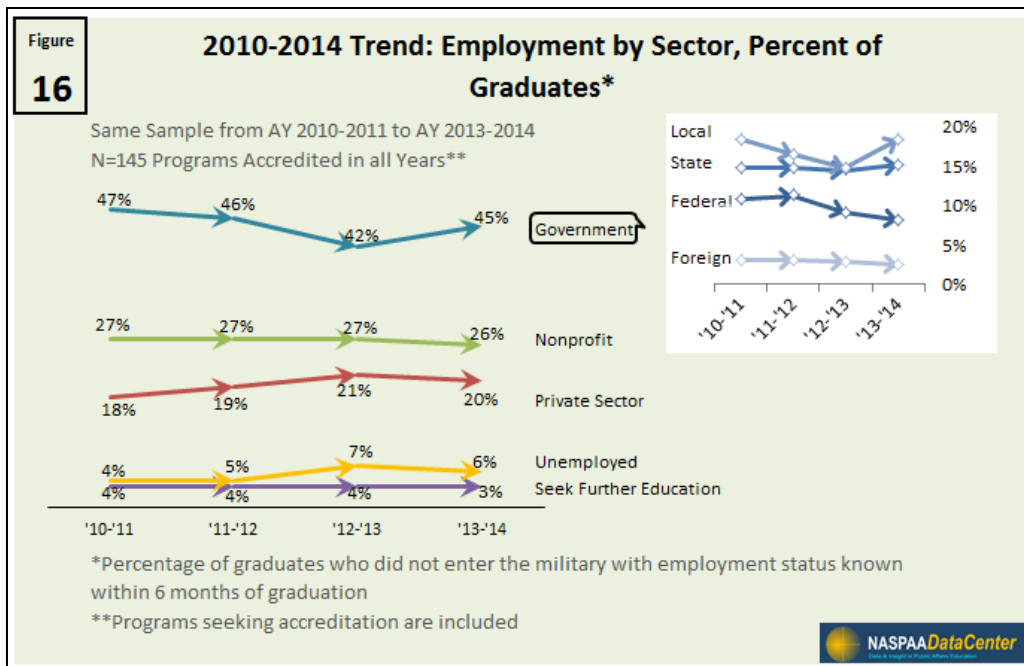Excluding graduates whose employment status is unknown, in AY 2014-15 a major upsurge of local government job placements increased the overall government employment rate by 2 percentage points, while employment in the private and nonprofit sector remained stable at around 25 percent and 19 percent, respectively. Figure 15 presents government employment as the only sector to have increased employment. By

Figure 15

Employment by Sector, Percent of Graduates*

Academic Year 2009-2010 to Academic Year 2013-2014

*Percentage of graduates who did not enter the military with employment status known within 6 months of graduation

**Programs seeking accreditation are included

NASPAA*DataCenter*
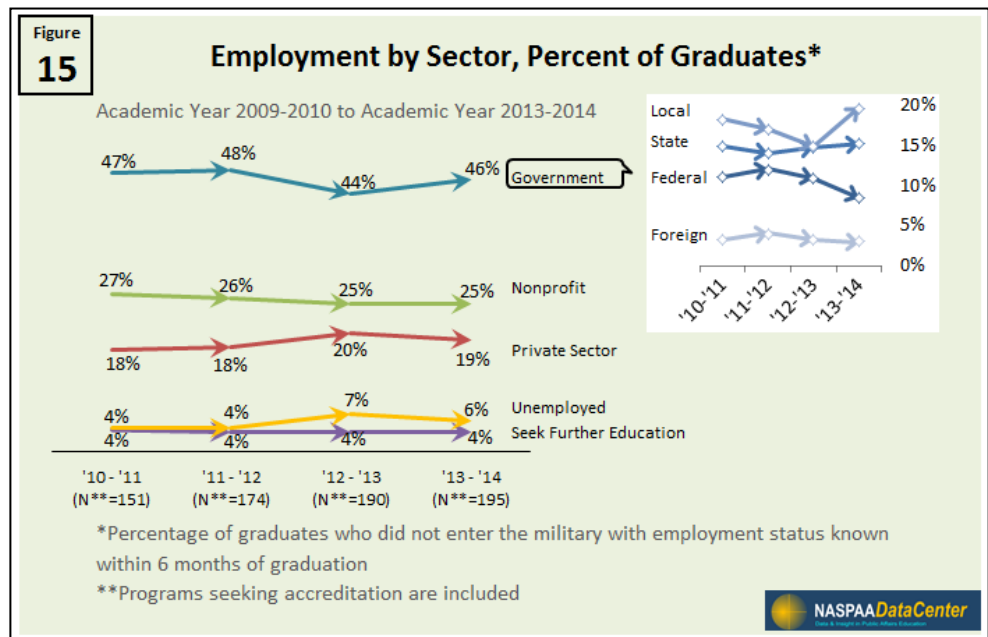
further disaggregating the data, the 2 percent increase in government job is mainly due to a major upsurge in local government employment. The same sample trend in Figure 16 tells a similar story: government employment bounced back in AY 2013-2014, with local government employment largely accountable.

Figure 16

2010-2014 Trend: Employment by Sector, Percent of Graduates*

Same Sample from AY 2010-2011 to AY 2013-2014
N=145 Programs Accredited in all Years**

Government: 47%, 46%, 42%, 45%
Nonprofit: 27%, 27%, 27%, 26%
Private Sector: 18%, 19%, 21%, 20%
Unemployed: 4%, 5%, 7%, 6%
Seek Further Education: 4%, 4%, 4%, 3%

'10-'11, '11-'12, '12-'13, '13-'14

Local, State, Federal, Foreign — 0% to 20%

*Percentage of graduates who did not enter the military with employment status known within 6 months of graduation
**Programs seeking accreditation are included

NASPAA*DataCenter*

Conclusion

The Annual Accreditation Report is intended to communicate the current state of public service education and analyze accredited program performance based on observations and comparisons of aggregated data from AY 2010-2011 to AY 2014-2015. Using these data, programs are able to benchmark their own performance and identify challenges and potentials facing the field, to help identify best practices and opportunities for innovation. Overall, accredited programs demonstrate stability and a broad sectoral impact on public service. Challenges facing accredited programs include infusing diversity into programs and better tracking career outcomes.

In future reports, as the number of accredited programs based outside of the United States grows, it will be valuable to consider a holistic look at the global public service education field, and perhaps provide separate data analyses of programs based both in the US and abroad, to present trends in public service education in a truly global context. Further, as an increasing number of programs earn accreditation for the first time, analyzing data specific to these programs could begin to tease out the impact and value of accreditation.