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PSC 527.01: Performance Measurement

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Political Science 527
Performance Measurement
Summer 2009

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Course Description

Performance measurement is the process by which organizations routinely and systematically gather data to assess their progress in fulfilling their missions. Since the early 1990s it has been touted as the key to managing for results and making public organizations more businesslike.

This course examines how to identify mission-related outcomes, develop indicators for measuring progress toward achieving those outcomes, and use the resulting data to improve the performance of government and nonprofit agencies. Students are asked to develop a fully integrated performance measurement system for an agency, unit, or program. (This is a simulated exercise; the unit or program must be real but the proposed system is to be your personal invention.)

Course Prerequisite

Students must have sufficient knowledge of a government or nonprofit agency/program to be able to design a performance measurement system for it, or at least the ability to obtain that knowledge quickly.

Course Objectives

1. To gain a better understanding of the nature and purposes of performance measurement systems and the ideological assumptions on which they rest.
2. To develop skill in designing a performance measurement system.
3. To draw personal conclusions about the value of such systems and whether their benefits outweigh their costs.

Required Text

Harry P. Hatry, Performance Measurement: Getting Results (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2006).

This book can be ordered through the UM Bookstore and mailed to you for an additional \$6 (www.umt.bookstore.com or 406-243-1234).

Other assigned readings are available through the Mansfield Library's Electronic Reserve system. (password= psc527)

Course Requirements and Grading

Discussion Board responses are due Thursday by roughly midnight. Students are required to complete all reading assignments, participate on the Discussion Board, and submit four writing assignments (20 points each) and a final performance measurement plan (100 points).

A = 167-180

A- = 162-166

B+ = 157 -161

B = 150-156

Note: These assignments require you to pretend you have been asked by a higher level administrator or board member to investigate and propose a performance measurement system for your program or unit (not the agency as a whole unless it is very small). Consequently, it is to be written in the form of an internal, technical report, i.e. succinct and to the point. You are to make it as realistic as possible but you are not expected to submit it to your agency.

Weekly Assignments

Thurs., May 28 [Purchase text and respond to Discussion Board Questions]

Thurs., June 4 An Introduction to Performance Measurement

Read the mini-lecture, Hatry's Preface and Chapter 1, and Osborne and Gaebler's chapter from Reinventing Government (Library Reserve). Also respond to the Discussion Board questions and begin working on Assignment #1.

Writing Assignment #1: Write 4 to 5 pages summarizing what you have learned about performance measurement (e.g., its purpose, logic, process, limitations). Do so in a way that demonstrates you have read and understood the assigned readings and can articulate the main points in your own words. **NOT due until Monday, June 22, by email attachment.**

Thurs., June 11 The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993

Read the mini-lecture and skim the strategic goals and measures in the Forest Service Performance and Accountability Report – FY 2004. Go to www.fs.fed.us/plan/par/2004/ and then click on the pdf link to “Annual Performance Report.” Try to get a sense of the report's internal logic, i.e., the logic of moving from strategic goals, to strategic outcomes, to measurable objectives. Also respond to the Discussion Board questions.

Thurs., June 18 The One-Size-Fits-All Mentality

Read the mini-lecture, Hatry Chapter 2, and James Q. Wilson's "Types of Agencies" on Library Reserve. Be prepared to identify the "type" of your agency (viz. Wilson's conceptual framework) and the potential difficulties in measuring its performance.

****Writing Assignment #1 due Monday, June 22 by email attachment****

Thurs., June 25 Developing an Outcome Sequence Chart

Read the mini-lecture and Hatry Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Begin work on Assignment #2. In preparation, review the student papers on Electronic Reserve. Also, begin working on Writing Assignment #2.

Writing Assignment #2. 1) Write the Introduction to your Technical Report (1 or 2 paragraphs). You will want to introduce the purpose of the report by, for example, briefly defining the concept of performance measurement, citing a few of its advantages, and establishing the importance of exploring the value of such a system for your agency or work unit. 2) Write an introductory paragraph for a section entitled "Outcome-Sequence Chart" which explains what these charts are and the roles they play in performance measurement. 3) Develop and present your outcome-sequence chart based on 1 or 2 core value-creating activities that your unit is responsible for carrying out. 4) Write a narrative explaining your core activity and your outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes. [Don't include the measurable indicators yet]. Take your guidance from the student paper on Electronic Reserve. **Due Monday, July 5.**

Thurs., July 2 Developing an Outcome Sequence Chart (continued)

Finish developing your Chart and submit assignment #2 by **Monday, July 5.**

Thurs., July 9 Identifying Measurable Indicators and Benchmarks

Read the mini-lecture and Hatry Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, and respond to the Discussion Board questions. Begin working on Writing Assignment #3 which is **due Monday, July 20.**

Writing Assignment #3: 1) Identify appropriate measures for each output and outcome and include them on your chart(s). (No measure is needed for your Core Activity). 2) Create a new section entitled "Measurable Indicators and Benchmarks", introduce these two concepts, and then identify your proposed measurable indicators and benchmarks for each output and outcome. (See student paper). 3) Add a brief analysis of measurement difficulties (See student paper).

Thurs., July 16 Identifying Measurable Indicators and Benchmarks (continued)

Finish writing assignment #3 and submit it by **Monday, July 20.**

Thurs., July 23 Analyzing, Reporting, and Using Performance Information

Read the mini-lecture and Hatry Chapters 10, 11, and 12, and respond to the Discussion Board questions. Submit writing assignment #4 by **Monday, July 27**.

Writing Assignment #4. Create a section describing how you will analyze, report, and use your performance information. Keep your proposal focused on how data will be used to close the gap between actual and desired performance. (See student paper).

Thurs., July 30 Ensuring System Integrity

Skip Hatry's chapter on Results-Based Budgeting and read Chapters 14-16, respond to the Discussion Board questions, and submit your final report by **Monday, August 3**.

Final Report. 1) Integrate assignments #2-#4 into a final report, 2) add a brief section explaining how you will ensure the integrity of the system so that it doesn't become a hollow ritual, and 3) add a brief conclusion/recommendation section. (e.g., having completed this analysis, are you going to recommend implementation to your boss or not?)