

**PPOL 215 Capstone Seminar: The Ethics and Practice of Public Policy**  
**Spring, 2007**

**SYLLABUS: January 12, 2006**

**Professors:**

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**Office Hours; By Appointment**

**Class meeting:**      Tuesday, 7:10 – 9:00 pm                      MPA 208; 2020 K Street, 11and 13

**Course Description and Objective:**

Students will work in teams to design and analyze a substantive policy issue and present findings in response to a project scope of work developed by one of the clients and selected by the instructor.

This course is a capstone of your professional education and an introduction into the professional practice of public policy analysis. During this semester, you will draw on the tools and expertise garnered from prior coursework to analyze one or more important public policy problems. On the basis of that analysis, you will then develop recommendations for dealing with those problems to a client official or agency.

You can expect to apply and demonstrate skills in problem definition, issue framing, collection of data and information, interviewing, selection and analyses of alternatives, presentation of findings and recommendations, design of implementation tools and administrative procedures and organizations, report writing and oral presentation to policymakers, and appreciation of practical and ethical issues in the content of policy and the process of making and implementing it.

If you are **not** in your final semester of course work towards a Master's Degree, contact Prof. Cordes immediately to discuss whether you have had enough classes and experience to benefit fully from the class and to succeed in it.

## **Grading and Class Assignments**

**Your grade in the course will be based on three assignments.**

### **1. Completion of On-Line Test on Protocols for Treatment of Human Subjects (10 percent)**

Over the past several decades, there has been growing interest and pressures to ensure that researchers treat human subjects in an appropriate and ethical manner. Though much of this concern was originally directed toward medical research, a number of highly-publicized cases in the 1970s and 1980s have led to the development of both guidelines for ethical treatment of human subjects in social science research and a now-mandatory process that universities, think-tanks, and other associations engaged in social science research must follow to ensure that such guidelines are followed. Many of you will encounter what is now commonly referred to as the “IRB process” (where IRB stands for Institutional Review Board) in your professional work, and even when not subject to the IRB process, will still be called upon to act ethically when working with human subjects. To familiarize yourselves with what this is all about, you will each be required to take and pass an on-line test on ethical treatment of human subjects in the social and behavioral sciences, and to meet and discuss issues in the process of taking that test in a class session. Details of how to take and complete the test will be posted on the Blackboard website,

### **2, Review and “Mini-Critique” of Past Capstone Projects (10 percent)**

Both to give you an idea of what other students have accomplished in the capstone, and to “exercise” your own critical and analytical faculties, each of you will choose one of several past capstone projects that will be posted on the Blackboard website. You will prepare a short review of the study providing (a) a succinct summary of the issues and/or problems addressed in the report, (b) a description of what you believe to be the strengths of the report, and (c) a discussion of any limitations or areas for improvement in the report. This summary is to be no more than 3 pages, single-spaced in length

### **3. Capstone Project (80 Percent)**

The major assignment will be to work on one of several capstone projects for a client who has requested our expertise. Details of the project are provided below. The project grade will be based on (a) the overall strength and quality of the report (85 percent of project grade); and the capstone team leaders assessment of your individual contribution to the team effort (15 percent of the project grade). The latter grade will be based both on the capstone team-leader’s assessment and on the evaluation of your contribution to the project from your fellow team members using a rating form submitted to the capstone team leader.

### **4. Class session on Teams (required but ungraded)**

Because much policy work involves working with complex issues that have “lots of moving parts” working in teams is increasingly becoming the norm in much policy work. Each of the capstone instructors has considerable professional experience outside the university working in project teams much like the ones that you will be in. We are fortunate that one of us, Dr. Rita Hilton, is studying teams professionally, and she will share the insights of her work with you in a class session that will be held the week of February 26 (see class schedule).

**Projects and Project Assignments:**

Study teams, each consisting of five to eight students, will each undertake a project for a client that has been selected by the instructor. At the first class meeting, students will have the opportunity to request assignment to a specific project, but all project assignments will be made by the instructor. Project assignments will balance individual students' interests and fields of expertise with the objective of assembling a team whose members' strengths complement rather than duplicate each other.

Specific substantive expertise is not required to participate in a team, and in previous semesters, some students have specifically requested projects outside of their area of expertise. Policy and management professionals are expected to be generalists, able to apply their analytical competencies to a wide range of policy, administration, and political problems. When making your project request, consider not only the subject matter but also the tasks that are involved in the project. Notice that some projects will require more initial work with the client to better define the scope of work; some students appreciate the flexibility that this allows, while other students prefer more detailed work plans.

Project titles are listed below; see the appendix for full scopes of work.

1. Anacostia Education Partnership / Hanna Doerr, hhdoerr@gwu.edu
2. Equal Rights Center / Kathleen Overr, KOverr@equalrightscenter.org
3. National Capital Planning Commission / Julia Koster, julia.koster@ncpc.gov
4. Montgomery County Planning Board I / Roselle George, Roselle.George@mncppc-mc.org
5. Montgomery County Planning Board II / Roselle George, Roselle.George@mncppc-mc.org
6. Task Force on National Service / Kathy Newcomer, newcomer@gwu.edu
7. U.S. Department of the Interior / Ben Simon, bsimon@gwu.edu

### **Project Process: Design and Execution**

For each project, the client will meet with the study team during the second or third week of the semester to outline the problem as it sees it and discuss the kind of product it is interested in receiving. The client will also provide some initial contacts and background information. The team will collect information, frame and analyze issues, prepare a report, including examples or drafts of any legislative instructions or administrative instruments necessary to implement recommendations, and develop strategy for moving the policy proposal through the appropriate policy making and implementation bodies. Each team will present its work in written, graphic, and oral forms.

Team members will refine the scope of work, identify the tasks involved, a timetable for their completion, allocate responsibilities among its members, who will be responsible for completing assignments on time and at high professional standards.

The instructor will be available for consultation throughout the study period. Except for required class meetings and "check-in" meetings listed on the schedule (see page 5), study teams can decide for themselves when and how often to meet with their faculty advisor. However, study teams are **strongly encouraged** to meet with their advisor regularly. Having to explain and "defend" decisions to the advisor is a valuable exercise that forces team members to think clearly and thoroughly. The advisor can also help study teams to navigate complex details, identify viable analytical strategies, understand and manage the client's needs, and organize work to make maximum use of study team members' time.

The work will be organized into the following (somewhat overlapping) phases:

1. Problem definition, issue framing, fact-finding on problem and its causes
2. Study design and adjustment to scope of work, if needed
3. Collection and analysis of data and information and identification of policy options.
4. Analysis of data and information to assess alternative policy options or approaches
5. Development of findings and recommendations.
6. Design of implementation strategy.
7. Drafting of the report, including appropriate graphics
8. Review and revision for the final report.
9. Formal presentation to Clients

Presentation of the report will be made in a PowerPoint presentation to the client and other experts, sitting as a "jury," to critique both the substance of the work and its presentation. This presentation should be structured so that each member of the team has a role.

The class will only meet during five of the scheduled class times, as noted below.

**Table 1:** Schedule

Week #	Week of Monday...	
1	January 15	<b>Meet as a class on Tuesday, January 16.</b> Introduction and class overview
2-3	January 22, 29	Meet with the client, subject to client's availability
2-3	January 30	<b>Meet as a class.</b> Class session on Ethical treatment of Human Subjects. This session will be joint with the MPA capstone group and will take place in MPA 310. Students unable to attend the January 30 session, should attend the same session on Weds. January 31.
4	February 5	Meet as groups to commence project design, background research, and revisions to scope of work
5	February 12	Schedule a meeting with the instructor to discuss progress and informally present analytical approach. Study teams are encouraged to schedule this meeting earlier, if they are ready.
6-9	February 19, 26, March 5, 19	<i>UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY: MONDAY, 2/19/07</i> <i>SPRING BREAK: MONDAY, 3/12/07 TO FRIDAY, 3/17/07</i>  Execute project design. Meet with the instructor as needed. Draft a working outline and make revisions as necessary.
6-9	February 26	<b>Meet as a class.</b> Required class section on working in teams (Dr. Rita Hilton)
	<b>Friday, March 23</b>	<b>Submit a working outline of the project report for review by the instructor</b>
10	March 26	Schedule a meeting with the instructor to receive comments on the working outline and discuss progress.
11-15	April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	Develop draft report and start planning for the oral presentation for the client <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>MOCK PRESENTATIONS: Meet as a class on Monday, April 30 and Wednesday, May 2 (designated Monday)</b></li> <li>▪ Schedule a final presentation with the client.</li> <li>▪ Meet with the instructor as needed to finalize the report and prepare the oral presentation.</li> <li>▪ Note that the last day of classes is Wednesday, May 2, and final exams begin on Monday, May 7.</li> </ul>

**Team Member Evaluation**

Near the end of the semester, the instructor will distribute an evaluation form. Every student will be asked to evaluate the other member's of his or her team on the basis of the following criteria:

- 
- Attendance at team meetings
- Timely written work
- Quality of contributions
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- Fairness
- Consideration of others' views
- Creativity
- Decisiveness

All forms will be confidential.

**APPENDIX II**  
*PROJECT SCOPES OF WORK*

**1. Community Involvement in the Anacostia Education Community**

**Client: The Anacostia Education Partnership Community Coalition**

Contact: Thomas Bullock, Board member

The Anacostia Education Partnership (AEP) is an organization of concerned students who seek to find practical solutions to the problems that plague Anacostia Senior High School (ASHS). Our Board of Directors consists of George Washington University School of Public Policy and Public Administration masters students as well as high school students attending DC Public Schools. Through building and leveraging the diverse resources of a coalition of stakeholders in and around Anacostia, AEP will serve as a catalyst for positive change in the quality of education public school students receive.

**Problem:**

Students at the School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University have been tutoring students at ASHS for more than a decade. After seeing that student potential was not being fully realized, several of these tutors decided to do something more. Spending one hour per week in Anacostia is not enough to understand the community or even to understand one person in it. It is enough, however, to glimpse the vast potential each student in Anacostia wants to realize, and to be saddened that many of them will be blocked by factors beyond their control.

At ASHS, many juniors are reading well below grade level. Fewer students in D.C. Public Schools achieve basic proficiency in math, reading, and writing than the national average (National Center for Education). In 2005, almost 80 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> graders at ASHS demonstrated "Below Basic" reading skills on the Stanford 9 standardized test and 94 percent scored "Below Basic" on the math portion (DCPS).

One of the barriers to student achievement cited in education reform literature is inadequate family and community involvement in the schools, particularly in urban environments. How robust is the family and community involvement currently supporting ASHS? To what extent could additional family and community involvement programs contribute to improvements in the state of affairs mentioned above? What steps can the community of Anacostia take to better support ASHS? In turn, how can ASHS use the talents of a caring and energetic community to realize improvement in student achievement?

**Project Objectives:**

Develop a program encouraging parent involvement activities for 9<sup>th</sup> graders that can boost participation and involvement by parents in their student's academic achievement at Anacostia Senior High School.

**Project Scope of Work:**

1. Review literature to identify best practices for family and community involvement in schools in urban neighborhoods similar to Anacostia, with a focus on programs that are tied to improving parent participation in student academic achievement.
2. Collect relevant, available data on the institutional environment, students, school families, faculty, and the community.
3. Work with the AEP Community Coalition to identify and catalogue any programs that foster 9<sup>th</sup> grade parent involvement at ASHS. The Coalition has already been established, though may be expanded throughout the course of the project. This work should help frame the policy and program recommendations by providing insight into the Anacostia community and what may or may not have worked in the past.
4. With the assistance of the AEP Board, assemble a group of key administrators, teachers, parents and students in various grades (many of these individuals are on the Community Coalition) to ascertain the demand for and openness to existing and hypothetical programs based on the best practices identified in the literature review. What are the perceived benefits and what concerns does each group have about increased community involvement in the school? This work can be conducted through written surveys, interviews, focus groups, or any other method deemed appropriate by the student researchers and the AEP Board of Directors.
5. Prepare a final report:
  - a. Present key findings of the literature review.
  - b. Use the findings from step 4 to assess prospects for implementing programs that boost community involvement in the school (which, in turn, are expected to promote student academic achievement).
  - c. Recommend a course of action to the AEP Community Board, including programs and/or strategies for increasing this kind of community involvement, and next steps.

## 2. The Impact of the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977

**Client:** The Equal Rights Center (ERC)  
**Contacts:** Arlene Corbin Lewis, 202.370.3204  
Tatiana L. Zajd, 202.370.3212

### I. Research Topic:

Almost 30 years ago, the D.C. Government passed what is today among the most comprehensive local human rights statutes in the United States. The Human Rights Act of 1977 (HRA) goes above and beyond more familiar federal rights legislation to address protections not only on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability but also age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, source of income, and place of residence or business. The purpose of this project is to trace the origins and evolution of the HRA, assess the HRA's impact on protected classes, and explore related changes in D.C. government policy. Tasks will likely include research on human rights legislation generally, legislative analysis, primary data collection through interviews, and some analysis of socioeconomic and demographic data.

### II. Research Objectives:

- A. Assess the overall impact and success of the HRA on D.C. citizens and on the D.C. government;
- B. Trace the motivation behind D.C. government's identification of the HRA's original protected classes and its subsequent additions;
- C. Discover what prompted the drafting of the HRA in 1977 and understand D.C.'s political climate at the time it was passed;
- D. Evaluate the population's knowledge of the HRA's existence and its protections;
- E. Trace the level of assistance that has been provided under the HRA, determine the number of complaints received since the HRA's enactment, and quantify the complaints' breakdown (housing, employment, public accommodations, and disability rights, as well as protected classes);
- F. Assess whether and how HRA-based complaints have changed over the past 30 years;
- G. Estimate the success rate of complaints filed before the Office of Human Rights (e.g. how many went to trial, how many were settled, etc.);
- H. Assess which jurisdictions have passed legislation equivalent to the HRA; and
- I. Enumerate organizations and resources that have been involved in HRA enforcement efforts.

### III. ERC's Background:

Founded by community leaders and interdenominational clergy, the ERC was formed in 1999 when the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington merged with the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington. The ERC is one of the first private civil rights organizations in the nation

dedicated to advancing the principles of fair housing, fair employment, and equal access to public accommodations.

Since its inception the ERC has been aggressively combating persistent discriminatory practices that place many Washington area residents at a disadvantage or illegally deny them access to opportunity. In partnership with fair housing groups from across the nation, and a variety of local and national community organizations, academics, researchers, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and other civil rights litigators, the ERC implements effective education, research, testing, counseling, enforcement, and advocacy programs. Civil rights experts, student interns, and volunteers use both traditional and novel techniques to identify, test, and document discriminatory practices in areas of housing, employment, public accommodations, government services, disability rights and immigration rights.

#### **IV. Sources of data or information the ERC has access to and can provide to students:**

##### **A. Existing reports: (available)**

*"In Search of Decent Housing in the D.C. Metropolitan Area: Affordable Housing Crisis For Section 8 Voucher Holders"* — conducted by the ERC with assistance from the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, April 2005; *"Department of Human Services Language Access Testing"* — conducted by the ERC in conjunction with the National Council of La Raza, June 2003 to December 2003.

##### **B. Brief Summary of HRA Major Cases:**

Over the past 30 years, major cases alleging violations of the HRA have been filed in D.C. Some landmark cases include:

- *Gay Rights Coalition of Georgetown University Law Center, et al. v. Georgetown University, et al.* was brought under the HRA concerning sexual orientation discrimination.
- *Underwood v. Archer Management Services* is a case that was brought under the HRA regarding personal appearance discrimination.

The ERC has also filed and settled several important cases under the HRA especially in its efforts to challenge discrimination against Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) holders under source of income protections.

Examples of other major cases brought by the ERC include a suit filed in 2000 against a taxi cab company that failed to dispatch cabs to the predominantly African-American Southeast quadrant of D.C. This case was successfully settled in 2004 based on findings of race and place of residence or business discrimination.

In 2002 two plaintiffs, their realtor and the ERC filed and settled a significant case based on age and gender discrimination after the two plaintiffs were told that their application to buy a condominium was denied because they were too young. Additionally, the female plaintiff's income was refused.

The following year, in 2003, the ERC was instrumental in challenging housing providers who denied Latinos the opportunity to rent or purchase apartments. This case, which revealed national origin-based discrimination in D.C., was settled in 2004.

C. Additional sources of information include:

*Local Human Rights and Relations Agencies*

<a href="#">Alexandria Office of Human Rights</a> (703) 838-6390	<a href="#">Maryland Commission on Human Relations</a> (410) 767-8600
<a href="#">DC Office of Human Rights</a> (202) 727-4559	<a href="#">Montgomery County Office of Human Rights</a> (240) 777-8450
<a href="#">Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</a> (202) 257-7377	<a href="#">Poverty &amp; Race Research Action Council</a> Chester Hartman, Director of Research (202) 906-8023
<a href="#">Fairfax County Human Rights Commission</a> (703) 324-2953	<a href="#">Prince George’s County Human Relations Commission</a> (301) 883-6170
<a href="#">Justice Department (Civil Rights Division)</a> (202) 514-4713	<a href="#">Prince William County Human Rights Commission</a> (703) 792-4680
<a href="#">HUD Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity</a> (800) 669-9777	<a href="#">Virginia Council on Human Rights</a> (804) 225-2292

D. Contacts who can provide assistance:

- James O. Gibson, ERC Board Member; Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Social Policy, [jim.gibson@cssp.org](mailto:jim.gibson@cssp.org);
- George Ruttinger, Esq., ERC Board Member; [gruttinger@crowell.com](mailto:gruttinger@crowell.com);
- Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, Executive Director, ERC, [bkahn@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:bkahn@equalrightscenter.org);
- Jessica Lightfoot, Director of Testing and Investigations, ERC, [jlightfoot@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:jlightfoot@equalrightscenter.org);
- Kathleen Walsh, Esq., Disability Rights Program Manager, ERC, [kwalsh@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:kwalsh@equalrightscenter.org);
- Kinshasa Hillery, Project Assistant, ERC (for employment-related matters), [KHillery@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:KHillery@equalrightscenter.org);
- Roderic V.O. Boggs, Esq., Executive Director, Washington Lawyers’ Committee, [rod\\_boggs@washlaw.org](mailto:rod_boggs@washlaw.org);
- Bob Bruskin, Esq., Senior Counsel, Washington Lawyers’ Committee, [bob\\_bruskin@washlaw.org](mailto:bob_bruskin@washlaw.org);
- Elaine Gardner, Esq., Director, Disability Rights Project, Washington Lawyers’ Committee, [elaine\\_gardner@washlaw.org](mailto:elaine_gardner@washlaw.org);
- Marc Fiedler, Esq., Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Disability Rights Council, [mfiedler@koonz.com](mailto:mfiedler@koonz.com);
- Joseph M. Sellers, Esq., Former Project Director, Equal Employment Opportunity Project, Washington Lawyers’ Committee, [sellers@cmht.com](mailto:sellers@cmht.com);
- Charles W. Jackson, Founder, Fair Employment Council, [cjackson@abcpcs.org](mailto:cjackson@abcpcs.org).

### 3. The Height of Buildings Act

**Client:** National Capital Planning Commission

**Contacts:** John Mann, john.mann@ncpc.gov  
Julia Koster, julia.koster@ncpc.gov

#### **Project Introduction**

When the Height of Buildings Act was enacted in 1910 the central area of Washington was largely confined to the areas within the boundary of the original L'Enfant City. Outlying areas of the District were mostly low-density residential areas characterized by one- and two-story buildings with commercial areas serving adjacent neighborhoods.

Originally enacted for a variety of reasons—fire and life safety, provision of light and air, advancement of the City Beautiful movement—the Act today is used primarily as a tool to protect the sweeping horizontal skyline and for the protection of some of our most cherished views to and from the original L'Enfant City. The geographic boundary of the protected area might be described as the area bounded by the ridgeline surrounding the central area that forms a topographic bowl: the Florida Avenue escarpment (the boundary of the L'Enfant Plan), the Anacostia Hills, and Arlington Hills. The bowl has forested ridgelines punctuated with constructed forms, and provides unobstructed views of the monumental core.

This project is intended to be used a tool to evaluate the Commission's long-standing policies supporting the Height of Buildings Act. Perhaps as a result of the District's new comprehensive plan, public curiosity regarding the Act has intensified recently, with as many different opinions expressed as there are people to express them. In order to address some of the potential issues, the following questions are posed to stimulate analysis and thought that can accomplish the goals of promoting economic development in the city, increasing the population, and protecting some of the most cherished views and attributes of the nation's capital.

The assignment consists of three components: assessing the validity of arguments for and against the Height Act; reviewing similar height limitations and the characteristics of other cities with horizontal skylines domestically and abroad; and evaluating how a change to the Act might affect development in Washington.

#### **Arguments For and Against the Act**

There are several arguments both for and against the Height of Buildings Act. The first step in this exercise is to analyze the range of arguments on both sides of the issue and determine which are the most compelling. The following questions can be used to initiate analysis of the Act.

- Has the Act ensured that Washington has a horizontal skyline? Is this good or bad?
- Have important views been adequately protected?
- Has the horizontal skyline imposed limitations on the architecture of Washington?
- Are retail ceiling heights limited because of the Act, or, are the floors sunken below grade to compensate for the lack of allowable height?

- Has the Act stifled or established the aesthetic look of buildings in Washington?
- Does the Act encourage human scale development, fulfilling the characteristics of new urbanist development?
- Is the District near “build-out” because of height limitations?
- Has the Height Act spurred development in areas of the District where it otherwise may not have occurred?
- Have height restrictions contributed to the lack of affordable housing in the region because the lower building heights create higher per-unit residential costs?
- Has the limitation on building heights (and the associated limitations on floor-area ratio) affected economic development?
- Has the limitation on building heights affected the ability to meet market needs?
- Has the limitation on building heights meant that the market for high-rise buildings has moved to other jurisdictions in the region?
- Do the limitations imposed by the Act help moderate the economic cycle in Washington?
- Has the Act affected sprawl in the region?

### **Height Limitations Domestically and Abroad**

Most cities have height limitations of one type or another, usually codified through zoning regulations. And older foreign cities, including some world capitals, have skylines that have traditionally been horizontal. In this portion of the project the study will:

- Analyze the patterns of other cities, both domestically and abroad, to review height limitations in general;
- Evaluate the effect those limitations may have had on growth and development;
- Analyze how older (often European) cities developed their horizontal skylines;
- Determine how those cities may have adopted height limits to changing times and circumstances, and;
- Present a case study of cities traditionally subject to height limitations.

### **How Change Might Affect Development in Washington**

The hypothesis for the final part of the project is to evaluate if it is time to rethink the height limits in the District of Columbia. Using the information developed in the first two parts of the project, analyze the effects of amending the Height Act to determine the potential outcomes. The following question can be used to generate analysis but the research should not be confined to these questions.

- Was the Height of Buildings Act meant to protect the traditional central core of the District?
- Should taller buildings be allowed in areas adjacent to intense—and higher—development?
- Should taller buildings (and increased density) be used as an economic development tool to encourage new construction in the eastern areas of the District that have long lagged behind the prosperity of the western side of the District?
- If taller buildings (and increased density) were allowed outside the areas identified for viewshed protection, would development occur?

- What type of development? Residential, office, mixed use?
- How might this change affect land values?
- If residential development is projected to occur, what housing market is likely to be served? (E.g., would lower land values result in middle-class housing?)
- What building heights would be appropriate?
- How would current zoning need to change?
- Should increased height be allowed as a matter of right? Or should TDRs be used?
- How does the changing topography of the District affect decisions determining appropriate height?
- How do you “draw the line” where increased height is acceptable?
- Where should the line be drawn?

### **Sources**

Existing reports

Raw data

Groups of people to contact

### **Background: The National Capital Planning Commission**

The National Capital Planning Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the National Capital Region, which includes the District of Columbia; Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland; and Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties in Virginia, including the cities and towns located within the geographic area bounded by these counties. The Commission is responsible for preserving the unique beauty and historic urban design that have made Washington one of the most admired capital cities in the world.

The membership of the National Capital Planning Commission reflects the diverse local and federal interests and constituencies that shape planning in the nation's capital. The 12-member Commission includes five citizens with experience in city or regional planning, three of whom are appointed by the President of the United States and two by the Mayor of the District of Columbia. By law, Mayoral appointees must be residents of the District of Columbia; at least one of the Presidential appointees must be a resident of Maryland and one a resident of Virginia. Ex Officio members of the Commission include the heads of those Executive Branch agencies with significant land holdings in the National Capital Region, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chairman of the City Council, and the Chairmen of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate committees with oversight responsibility for the District of Columbia. These Ex Officio members often delegate alternates to represent them on the Commission.

#### **4. Montgomery County Planning Board I / Roselle George, Roselle.George@mncppc-mc.org**

Client: Montgomery County (MD) Planning Board  
Contacts: Roselle George, Roselle.George@mncppc-mc.org

The mission of the Montgomery County (MD) Planning Board can be described as building great communities. This is pursued first by creating master plans that provide considerable direction for the ways in which communities will develop and change in the future. And secondly, by a development review process that seeks to ensure that private development implements the goals and objectives of master plans.

The Planning Board and staff have struggled to develop meaningful performance measures for these two intertwined activities. This Capstone project would develop performance measures that could or should indicate whether:

- Our master planning process creates great plans that can be implemented?
- The planning goals established in our master planning process are being met?
- Development projects are improved -- from the perspective of future residents, tenants, workers or visitors -- by the actions taken by public officials?
- The right kinds and amounts of resources (staff and other resources) are being applied to the master planning and development review processes?
- The master planning and development review processes are conducted in fair, professional, transparent, and efficient ways?

Because these issues do not always lend themselves to metrics or numerical measures, the capstone team may recommend alternative methods for evaluating the master planning and review processes and the communities/development projects that result. An example of an alternative method could be an evaluation process that looks a set of example projects, interviews participants, and identifies what worked, what did not, what steps could be taken to make improvements.

## 5. Montgomery County Planning Board II

Client: Montgomery County (MD) Planning Board  
Contact: Roselle George, Roselle.George@mncppc-mc.org

Montgomery County (MD) is transitioning from a period when most development occurs on large parcels at the edge of suburbia to a period where most development is infill and redevelopment. This transition is consistent with an attempt to minimize sprawl and to have a land use pattern that more efficiently uses public resources, but it creates new planning challenges.

A concern about "smart growth" is that the benefits are diffuse and regional, while the negative impacts are highly concentrated to adjacent neighborhoods. This can mean that the neighbors of infill developments feel they are being asked to deal with traffic congestion, crowded schools, etc so that others do not have to. An alternative to this paradigm is to insist that infill and redevelopment improve the quality of life for everyone. Montgomery County Planning Department staff have a hypothesis that if new development provides sufficient tangible benefits to nearby residents, then the negative impacts of redevelopment can be wholly or partially mitigated. Aspects of a project that provide benefits can include: very high quality architecture and site design, the inclusion of services and amenities desired by the community, and high quality connections from neighborhoods to activity centers. This capstone team will look at what attributes of new development add to the quality of life, how to determine if a proposed project's positive attributes are sufficient, and processes/procedures that are needed to ensure that new development is required to include these desired elements. Among the challenges: some of the most desired attributes (a particular retail establishment, for example) in a development project are not typically within the purview of the public officials reviewing development proposals.

## 6. Task Force on National Service

Client: American Jewish Council Task Force on National Service

Contact: Kathy Newcomer, newcomer@gwu.edu

"National service" is an umbrella term for a wide range of volunteer and paid (typically below market wage) activities that are coordinated through a central entity and meet some unmet societal need. AmeriCorps, Teach for American and City Year are among the main programs that recruit and place workers in service positions. Outgoing GWU President Stephen J. Trachtenberg and other members of the GWU community are participating on a task force to develop a platform to support national service. To further that effort, this capstone project will perform a meta-analysis of the positive outcomes of national service. What are the main models of national service? What are the key outcomes of each model? What does the literature tell us about the advantages and disadvantages of each? Tasks entail policy analysis, based on a substantial literature review and interviews with program officials and advocates of national service.

## 7. Cooperative Approaches to Environmental Improvement and Protection

**Client:** Dr. Ben Simon, Assistant Director, Office of Policy , U.S. Department of the Interior.

Project results will help inform senior policymakers in the Department of the Interior, which along with EPA, Commerce, and other government agencies plays a key role in the development of policies for protecting and improving the environment, on the uses and also limitations of collaborative models for protecting and improving the environment.

**Problem:** It has been suggested that ‘collaboration’ – between public and private parties, often involving intergovernmental commitments – are a more effective means of obtaining environmental improvements than regulations. There is a relatively limited, but growing body of experience in this area; across land, timber, watershed and other resources. While the push for use of collaborative arrangements as a vehicle for obtaining ‘results’ environmental improvements is strong, limited analytic review of experiences is available. Key unanswered questions surround issues such as: establishing evaluative metrics (including in comparison to other approaches); identifying necessary conditions for instigating collaboration across stakeholders; and estimating administrative costs.

**Tasks:** The objective of this project is to provide the client a product which: 1) provides a framework for understanding and assessing collaborative arrangements; 2) synthesizes ‘good practice’ lessons; and further, 3) extends this analysis into a proposal for addressing a locally-relevant resource challenge (e.g. reduction of ambient air pollution in Shenandoah National Park). Task execution will not necessary be sequential, but would include each of the following.

- 1) Initial literature survey, including GAO report (October, 2005), “Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies.” GAO-06-15
- 2) Detailed problem scoping and framing, based upon preliminary investigations. At this stage, it will be important to identify: critical parameters that define collaborative arrangements; and questions that *should* be posed in evaluating such.
- 3) Thorough literature review (including public-record sources), and meta-analysis, that results in a clear storyline on:
  - what is known (and what is not);
  - likely costs and benefits; and
  - institutional preconditions and pitfalls.
- 4) Drafting of report detailing results of above, including both analytic framework and synthesis of good practice lessons.

- 5) Contacting informants, and conducting interviews, to identify how collaborative arrangements might be structured to address degradation in SNP. Using the analytic framework developed by the team, this proposal would need to address such issues as: identifying all relevant actors (including multiple jurisdictions); defining expected outcomes; specifying necessary incentives and processes; outlining likely costs and benefits; and assessing political feasibility at this moment.
- 6) Presentation of concise, yet thorough and persuasive, product for the client.

## APPENDIX II

### GUIDELINES FOR REPORT WRITING AND PRESENTATION

*The final report should be 20-30 pages in length, double-spaced (5,000 to 7,500 words), exclusive of attached tables, graphs and other appendix material.*

1. *Identify your audience.* It is usually layered: The client is a decision maker or decision-making body. There is usually a staff audience as well. There may also be other audiences of peers of the client, media, and general public. Any document prepared for a public official must be assumed to be in the public domain.

It is important to understand the client's/audience's technical competence level, how they may apply the information conveyed, and the institutional and policy/political context within which they work.

2. *Identify key messages and get your message straight.* It is important to focus on a few key points, targeted to the identified audience.
3. *Simplify your words – present in simple, non-technical language, which is free of scientific jargon.* Strip away everything that isn't essential in order to make the point as clearly as possible.
4. *Describe the implications.* Remember what it was like not to understand the thing you are trying to explain. Every time you come to understand something new, you are transformed into a different person. The trick is to remember your untransformed self, and especially how the transformation took place.
5. *Get the facts straight.* Spell names and things correctly. Organize evidence in a logical sequence. Double-check the accuracy of figures (especially those derived by calculation) and other information. Know where you're the sources of your data and other information. Exercise due diligence as to their credibility.
6. *Understand the importance of graphics -- photos, charts, illustrations.* In presenting data, especially in briefing papers or executive summaries, simplify tables and graphics to convey the essential message. Details can go into appendices. For each table or graphic, include a complete and accurate caption. Coordinate your report's text with the table or graphic to which it refers. Graphs and tables should tell a story in a way that makes it possible for the reader to quickly grasp its point without having had two semesters of advanced econometrics.

7 Use academic citations sparingly. "For Further Information" may be a useful appendix.

The report should be organized (with some variations to fit the situation) as follows:

### **The Executive Summary or Briefing Paper**

Busy clients will read the executive summary of a report or a briefing paper based on it, and if it is compelling, may read the entire report. So these documents should be brief, clearly written and free of jargon; and organized to present:

- The central problem that has been addressed, and its importance;
- Major recommendations, with
  - i. concise statements of the supporting findings and
  - ii. the reasoning behind each of them.

The executive summary or briefing paper should be able to "stand alone" as a basis for decisions.

It also provides the basis for the PowerPoint presentation, which should take approximately 15 minutes and a maximum of 15 frames.

### **Introduction (The Problem)**

This section of the report explains how this got to be a problem and the kind of problem it is. The section should analyze its historical and/or policy context, and why its significance for the client and/or other publics. This may entail brief descriptions of any applicable laws, regulation, policy or management issues that are involved or have contributed to any of its dimensions. Remember, how the problem is framed greatly affects the kinds of responses that can be fashioned for it.

This section may also be used to describe how the study was conducted and provide a brief synopsis of the organization of the report.

### **Sections, as needed, to discuss salient aspects of the problem, findings and recommendations with respect to each.**

These sections of the report provide the detailed analyses that support the executive summary's findings and recommendations, which should be stated at the conclusion of each sub-section. The number of sections has to be tailored to fit the subject matter. The use of sub-headings and tables or graphics should be used where possible to provide appropriate historical or comparative information, and to simplify the presentation.

## **Appendices**

Detailed descriptions of methodology, references, and tables containing large amounts of data should be placed in appendices unless they are essential to the discussion in the body of the report. Appendices may also contain acknowledgements, copies of relevant statutes, regulations, MOUs, etc., and drafts of new policy or management instruments designed to implement the recommendations.

### APPENDIX III: CAPSTONE INSTRUCTION TEAM BIOS

**Nancy Y. Augustine, Ph.D.**, is Senior Research Associate with the George Washington Institute of Public Policy at George Washington University. Her research interests focus on public finance, economic development, and a wide range of state and local economic policy and governance issues. Dr. Augustine brings with her 10 years of experience as an urban planner at the local government level. She received a Master of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia in 1990, a Master of Arts in Economics from Georgetown University in 2000, and a Ph.D. in Public Policy (Urban Policy concentration) from the George Washington University in 2006. She also received her B.A. from George Washington.

**Joseph J. Cordes, Ph.D.** is Director of SPPPA and Professor of Economics, Public Policy and Public Administration, and International Affairs. He received a B.A. in Economics from Stanford University (1971), and the Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1977). Dr. Cordes was a Brookings Economic Policy fellow in the Office of Tax Policy in the U.S. Department of the Treasury in 1980-81, and served as a senior economist on the Treasury's Tax Reform project in 1984. From 1989 to 1991 he was Deputy Assistant Director for Tax Analysis at the Congressional Budget Office. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Urban Institute in 1998-1999, and is currently an Associate Scholar in the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute. He is presently engaged in co-editing a volume on the causes and policy implications of increasing convergence between nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses, and a volume comparing the evolution and challenges facing welfare state institutions in Europe and the United States.

**Rita M. Hilton, Ph.D.** Associate Professorial Lecturer of Public Policy and Public Administration: B.A. (Economics) B.A. (Philosophy), Seattle University; M.A (Ethics), University of Toronto; M.A. (Economics), M.P.A., Ph.D. Maxwell School, Syracuse University. Dr. Hilton has extensive experience in public finance, sustainable development policy, as well as management, gained over 15 years working at the World Bank. Dr. Hilton has worked in a variety of countries, including Nepal, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Guatemala, El Salvador, Yemen, India, and Romania. Research interests include application of institutional economics to public finance, government performance, team development, and leadership training.