January 28, 2010

MPA Students
Northern Illinois University

Dear Students:

The faculty of the MPA program at Northern Illinois University has adopted a writing across the curriculum policy in order to increase the writing proficiency of our students. The quality of writing has been a topic of discussion at several meetings of the board of advisors and the faculty. The employers of our MPA graduates continuously remind us that oral and written communication are critical skills that they seek in employees.

In order to insure a consistent and high quality approach to a writing across the curriculum policy, the faculty has adopted two books as reference for both writing style and grammar. All students are hereby required to adopt these two books as the reference for all papers submitted in the MPA curriculum. Every member of the faculty will have a desk copy of each book. Our hope is that any questions or concerns about grading and comments on writing style and grammar can be referenced to one of the two books.

This policy does not insure that MPA students will be required to only use one style or format for MPA courses. Quite the contrary, we wish to introduce students to a variety of writing formats in the course of programs. The point of adopting a grammar and style guide is that everyone in the program will use the same basic elements of style (Strunk and White) and the same grammar and citation rules (Turabian) when they do so.

We are also developing other initiatives to improve the writing quality of our students. I will report to you on these developments as we make progress on the policy. However, we do not want to wait any further in implementing the required writing manuals.

The principal writing manual is:


The principal style guide is:

Current students are required to adopt these books in the spring 2010 term, either in PSPA 695 Internship In Public Administration, or PSPA 699 Public Sector Research. The requirement will also pertain to all students admitted to the program beginning fall 2010. A book order for these courses has been placed with the NIU University Bookstore (815-753-1081).

Students can assume that these books are now required for each PSPA course in the MPA program. That includes the capstone paper. In fact, I have been referring to the Turabian book as I read and edit the capstone papers on my desk!

Please order your copy of these books at your earliest convenience.

We look forward to your feedback on this grand experiment to improve the writing in the program. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Peace,

Kurt Thurmaier  
Professor & Director  
Division of Public Administration  
Northern Illinois University  
204 IASBO Bldg  
815.753.0311  
kthur@niu.edu