

Calling all MAP Students: Consider ‘Issues in Public Organizational Management’

How do you make both your boss and your staff relatively happy? What is the best way to approach a human resources issue within your staff? How do you build strong effective teams in the workplace?

As social work students graduate and move up the career ladder, they invariably encounter these sorts of management questions in the workplace. From the need for conflict resolution among employees to strategy planning and expanding the scope of service delivery, social work leaders benefit from knowledge beyond clinical training. Students in the MSW Management and Policy concentration (MAP) have the opportunity to further develop this kind of skill set through an elective course called ‘Issues in Public Organizational Management.’

“Experience with all sorts of issues is important for young professionals to have in order to grow their careers. The course is very practical and oriented to future managers and directors in the social work field,” says Jianfeng (Jeff) Wang, director of Rutgers China Office and Special Assistant to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The challenges and culture of private agencies verses government agencies is one area of course exploration. Wang relates that the structural challenges are quite different between private and public organizations. Students gain a clearer picture of what it means to organize, lead and manage well in any organization, and to be familiar with practical issues in management processes and structure, human side issues in public management, and public management reform and innovation.

Wang says that as most of the students in the class are adults already in the workplace, he keeps the course conversational and engaging, with class involvement in the discussion of actual workplace scenarios and how they might be handled. The goal for students is to finish class with enhanced core skills in five areas: memo writing, oral presentation, analytic thinking, interpersonal relations, and collaborative problem solving.

Students work together in groups for a project where they are responsible for selecting a public organization to study. Each team conducts a comprehensive assessment of its selected organization and performs an in-depth analysis of management strengths and weaknesses by identifying a challenge that the managers of the organization are facing. Working together, team members create managerial strategies to maintain the strengths and address the weaknesses of the organization.

In addition, students are exposed to international management structures and challenges at international organizations, which may differ greatly from those at American agencies. Having grown up in China and received his Ph.D. in political science from Western Michigan University, Wang believes that international education for today’s students will broaden their world perspectives, and enhance their future careers by developing transnational competencies.

“We offer a comparative dimension for students through the international perspective. Students see there are different ways to tackle the problem and gain greater understanding of cultural differences in the workplace,” says Wang.

For more information or questions about this course, email Dr. Wang at jianfeng.wang@rutgers.edu