

GPSS Report  
Graduate Program Review  
Masters in Strategic Planning and Critical Infrastructures

On February 2nd, the University of Washington Graduate & Professional Student Senate had the GPSS Chief of Staff attend a 60 minute program review meeting with 6 graduate students in the Masters of Strategic Planning and Critical Infrastructures (MSPCI) program, via teleconference. The program review was also attended by a peer committee, who facilitated and asked students questions pertaining to their program. This review evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the perspectives of the MSPCI students. This report summarizes students' feedback for the consideration in the Graduate School Council's review of the MSPCI program. All students were invited through department emails and the 6 students who attended consisted of current and graduated students. Because the MSPCI program is online-only, the course was conducted in a way which differed from most UW courses.

#### Program

- Students felt the program description misled them in terms of what they would learn in the courses.
- Students wanted to learn more about Homeland Security protocols.
- They also wanted to learn more hard skills they could apply to their careers.
- Students thought they would be learning about emergency management.
- Students would've preferred a certification over a master's degree.

#### Courses

- Students wondered why they had to take so many epidemiology courses, when they wanted to learn more about emergency management.
- They felt epidemiology was important, but they didn't feel as though they needed 3 or 4 courses in that field.
- Students were upset that course materials were never updated.
- Students were upset faculty never took ownership of the course materials, and never came up with their own course materials.
- Students wished for more challenging courses, like the law course.

#### Faculty

- Students felt communication was a big issue with most of the faculty. They made an exception for their law professor, with whom they were impressed.
- Students expressed how instructors would assign homework but not answer emails in a timely manner. They also expressed a lack of dialogue in their courses.
- Students also noted how they had brought up these issues with the administration, but that instructors did not make positive changes.

#### Post-degree Career Field

- All students felt ill-prepared for the career field.
- Students explained how they would apply for jobs and go to job fairs, but would be told how they're not qualified for the positions, even if it's in emergency management.

### **Tuition**

- One student, who was a war veteran, didn't know why he had to pay full tuition for an online course when he could take any course at UW with a tuition-exemption. The reason why he took the course in the first place was because a friend had told him he could get his MSPCI with a tuition exemption.

### **Other**

- Many students expressed regret over taking the course, feeling their time and money had been wasted.
- Students expressed praise for Karen Fishler, their advisor, whom they felt communicated well with them.
- Only 2 of 20 respondents had positive feedback about the program.

### **Overview**

The vast majority, it seems the students who took the online MSPCI program were dissatisfied with the program in most respects. They had little praise for the program, and even expressed regret for taking it in the first place. Most expected a higher caliber of education at this university. Many students, while initially satisfied with the program would now not recommend it to others interested in emergency management. Students also felt the online environment was not conducive towards communicating with their peers and faculty, although they understood physical participation would be impossible. Students emphasized that lack of focus contributed towards their dislike of the program.