

Public Administration and Private Education

When I began my graduate coursework, if asked whether I envisioned myself as an educator, I would have dismissed it without a thought. The reason I enrolled in the M.P.A. program at the University of Delaware revolved around my desire to enter public service and hope of working my way into the local political arena. Besides, I had no background in education and at that time had little aspiration to venture in that direction.

As graduation neared in the spring of 2003, however, my initial plan of transforming a Legislative Fellowship into a full-time position slowly faded into obscurity due to the economic climate and talk of the state's hiring freeze. Law school, an eventual goal of mine for years, looked more likely in the next few months than I had anticipated. Eager to add some real-world experience to my résumé, I contacted local schools and businesses in hope of securing any position while the economy rebounded. The initial results—so few opportunities—were more than humbling.

Through some twist of fate, Salesianum School, a private, Catholic, all-boys, secondary school in Wilmington, Del., offered me a position as an Assistant Principal and Director of Activities after a thorough interviewing process. At 24 years old, not only did I find myself teaching a sophomore World History class but also at the table with school administrators, trustees, and local community leaders. This job involved aspects of education, management, finance, program evaluation, and strategic planning. My M.P.A. degree may not have directly led me on this course, but it more than prepared me for what the job entailed.



The Director of Activities primarily oversees the extracurricular programs—basically, anything possible that occurs outside of the academic day. On a daily basis, I drew on skills and knowledge I learned from the M.P.A. program: managing budgets for more than 45 student clubs and activities, evaluating school programs and activities already in place and those proposed, and supervising and assessing school moderators using newly created measurable objectives. Furthermore, understanding the intricacies of courses such as management and decision-making, organizational management, and human resources aided me when revising the school's strategic plan and the Middle States' accreditation process.

As I reflect on my time spent in Graham Hall [at the University of Delaware], I owe my level of preparedness for school administration to the M.P.A. program. Although my position as an Assistant Principal at a private secondary school fell somewhat outside of the typical scope through which a public administration program aims, it demonstrates how durable and applicable the degree is.

After four years, I transitioned from school administration into teaching full-time, so I could begin to bring to fruition my goal of attending law school. I retained, now as a faculty moderator, a club that a former teacher and I had expanded a few years ago. This year our Minority Coalition has taken steps to reach out beyond the walls

of our school into a new initiative aimed at providing service to our local community, particularly to demographic groups that remain underrepresented at Salesianum. It is my expectation that my experience in the M.P.A. program will be as valuable now as ever.

by Frank Mieczkowski