

**Construction and Validation of the Public Affairs Scale:
A Report on the Missouri State University Public Affairs Mission 2008-2009**

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The Public Affairs Mission at Missouri State University involves the facilitation and development of community engagement, cultural competence, and ethical leadership. This document summarizes the process the authors followed to construct the Public Affairs Student Self-Report Scale and the results of the scale validation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To develop the items included in the Public Affairs Self-Report Scale, the authors examined information from various organizations including the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Transcultural Nursing, and US Department of Health and Human Services: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The authors also consulted with the Missouri State Faculty Senate and three Provost Public Affairs committees, the Citizenship and Service-Learning office, Residence Life, the Provost's working definitions (<http://publicaffairs.missouristate.edu/41685.htm>), Associate Provost for Student Development and Public Affairs and Rachelle L. Darabi, and the Public Affairs Reports from the Missouri State colleges. You will find below the working definitions constructed from these sources as well the adopted Public Affairs Mission Goals (<http://publicaffairs.missouristate.edu/mission.htm>).

Working Definitions

Community Engagement is the process of *working collaboratively* with and through groups of people affiliated by geography, special interest or similar situations to *address issues influencing the quality of life* (<http://www.cdc.gov/phppo/pce/part1.htm>). Individuals skilled at community engagement are *effective participants in the world* around them – whether they are working for sustainability, better government, human rights, or other purposes.

Cultural Competence is *obtaining cultural information* and then *applying that knowledge* (<http://www.culturediversity.org/cultcomp.htm>). Individuals who are culturally competent are *culturally self aware*, conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, and able to utilize cultural knowledge *effectively in communication and behavior* (http://cecp.air.org/cultural/Q_integrated.htm#def). Culturally competent individuals can *interact effectively with peoples* of diverse origins, perspectives and abilities.

Ethical Leadership is *leadership informed by principles*. Ethical leaders *know their core values* and have the skills to *live them in all areas of life* (<http://www.ethicalleadership.org/philosophies/ethical-leadership>). *Communication, collaboration and consensus building* are important tools of ethical leaders. Ethical leaders bring about change, but they know that doing it the right way is as important as “getting it done.”

The Goals of Missouri State's Public Affairs Mission

Community Engagement

- Students will recognize the importance of contributing their knowledge and experiences to their own community and the broader society.
- Students will recognize the importance of scientific principles in the generation of sound public policy.

Cultural Competence

- Students will recognize and respect multiple perspectives and cultures.

Ethical Leadership

- Students will articulate their value systems, act ethically within the context of a democratic society, and demonstrate engaged and principled leadership.

METHODS

Procedures

Following examinations of such materials as those above, the authors created a series of 81 items designed to assess the three elements of the Public Affairs Mission at Missouri State University. A total of 30 items were created to assess Community Engagement, a total of 22 items were created to measure Cultural Competence, and a total of 29 items were created to measure Ethical Leadership. The 83 items of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996) were also included to further assess the construct validity of the Public Affairs Scale. These items were then administered to a sample of 255 undergraduate and graduate students at Missouri State University during the 2008-2009 academic year through the use of SurveyMonkey. The original questionnaire is presented in the attachment provided.

Participants

The sample was comprised of 70.6% women, 17.6% men, and 11.8% who chose not to answer that question. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 59 with a mean age of 23. Of the participants, 80% reported being Caucasians, 1.6% reported being African Americans, less than 1% reported being Asian Americans. Over 15% of participants chose to not answer that question. Of the students participating, 69.4% of them were undergraduate students, the remainder was graduate students. The undergraduate students were mostly freshmen (35.7%). In addition, the sample comprised about 10% each of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The students came from all colleges with the College of Health and Human Services (28.6%) and the College of Education (23.1%) having the most participants.

Analytical Strategy

The 81 original items were subjected to an Exploratory Factor Analysis in order to uncover stable underlying factors. We created the original items to fit one of the three elements of the Public Affairs Mission at Missouri State University: Community Engagement, Cultural Competence, and Ethical Leadership. Consequently, we expected 3 stable factors to emerge from the Factor Analysis and we ran the analysis as such.

The initial data analysis revealed the presence of three possible factors as predicted. We then proceeded to clean up the factor structure of the Public Affairs Scale by deleting items that did not fit the Public Affairs conceptual model. Reducing the number of items to a limited number per defined factor is one of the goals of factor analysis. Items were deleted from the scale for one of the following reasons: 1) items were not significantly loading (belonging) on their predicted factor, 2) items were loading on the wrong factor, or 3) items were loading on two or three of the factors to a relatively equal degree (cross-loading). Additionally, we kept some items that maintained conceptual breadth within the three areas, but neither significantly improved nor reduced the psychometric properties of the scale. We examined many possibilities to arrive at the current public affairs scale.

RESULTS

The Included Items

The scale is comprised of 40 items: 15 items for the Community Engagement subscale, 15 items for the Ethical Leadership subscale, and 10 items for the Cultural Competence subscale. The items along with their respective factor loadings are presented in Table 1. Figure 1 includes a user-friendly version of the 40-item scale. This structure explained 42% of the variance in the pattern of relationship among the 81 items. Seven of the included items had significant cross-loadings, but otherwise the structure was fairly clean. The alpha reliabilities of the 3 subscales were high to adequate: Community Engagement $\alpha = .90$, Ethical Leadership $\alpha = .92$, and Cultural Competence $\alpha = .75$.

Overall Ratings

Table 2 presents the means on the three themes of the Public Affairs Mission. These means represent the degree to which students report that they are maturing in relation to or participating in the mission. Overall, Cultural Competence was the most weakly endorsed element of the Public Affairs Mission. The most strongly endorsed element of the Public Affairs Mission was the Ethical Leadership. All three areas show similar degrees of variability in terms of the standard deviation and ceiling of the range.

Engagement in Public Affairs and Class Rank

Class rank was not strongly correlated with the endorsement of the themes of the Public Affairs Mission. However, statistically significant correlations were found between class rank and Community Engagement ($r = .14, p < .05$) and Cultural Competence ($r = .17, p < .01$). In general, the direction of the association was such that as class rank increased, so did the endorsement of the themes of the Public Affairs Mission. This is expected and desired, since we intend that students would better understand and participate in the themes of the Public Affairs Mission as they progressed with their studies. However, the correlations were not strong, which suggests that greater emphasis would need to be placed on the Public Affairs Mission at Missouri State for measurable maturation to be more apparent at the University level. The means by class rank are presented in Table 3.

Sufficient Sensitivity

The examination of the means and the standard deviations show that there is sufficient room for improvement in the students' level of participation in the mission utilizing this scale. Nevertheless, the mean endorsement for respondents on the Ethical Leadership subscale is relatively high, suggesting a possible ceiling effect and less room for change on this element.

Construct Validity

The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised is a previously validated instrument derived from the Social Change Model, which measures similar constructs as the Public Affairs Scale. It has been used at Missouri State University in Student Activities to educate and assess student leadership initiatives. We administered this survey as a means to assess construct validity of the Public Affairs Scale. The Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised is composed of eight constructs which represent critical values. These are Consciousness of Self (individual), Congruence (individual), Commitment (individual), Collaboration (group), Common Purpose (group), Controversy with Civility (group), and Citizenship (community/society) (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). Overall ratings for the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised are presented in Table 4. The highest means were found for Commitment and Congruence.

The associations between the eight constructs of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised and the three elements of the Public Affairs Scale are presented in Table 5. Figure 2 provides descriptions of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale – Revised subscales. All of the correlations are significant at the $p < .001$ level, showing a broad validation of the overall Public Affairs Conceptualization and Social Change Model. Likewise, correlations were highest between the Ethical Leadership Scale and all scales of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised as compared to the other Public Affairs Subscales with the exception of the correlation between Community Engagement and Citizenship ($r = .706$) and the correlation between Cultural Competence and Change ($r = .570$). The second highest correlation between Cultural Competence and a Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised Scale was with Controversy with Civility ($r = .529$). These findings offer strong support for the validity of the Public Affairs Scale. The correlations are highest between scales that are conceptually most similar, providing empirical validation of the constructs, without being too high to signify that the constructs were simply replicated in another scale.

DISCUSSION

Implications of the Results as a Program Evaluation

This validation project serves as a pilot program evaluation of the University's fulfillment of the Public Affairs mission with students using a relatively small sample. The results show that on average students endorsed items in the desired direction but less so on the Cultural Competence scale than the Community Engagement or Ethical Leadership scales. Students at all levels (i.e., freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate) generally appear engaged with the mission.

Levels of reliability and number of subscale items shows that students do not consistently respond to items intended to measure cultural competence as compared to the other themes, meaning they do not necessarily get exposure or understand how to engage with cultural competence in a consistent manner. These findings are consistent with the findings of our re-analysis of the diversity climate data (Levesque & Cornelius-White, 2009), which showed that different community constituencies (e.g., minority respondents, Caucasian respondents, respondents with disabilities, etc.) tend to see the university climate in different ways and that some groups do not appear to understand or strongly endorse the need for recruitment and retention of diverse individuals.

Future of Programmatic Evaluation

The main benefit of the public affairs scale is that it provides collaboratively constructed and empirically validated method of exploring the University's mission. While further revision is likely to occur utilizing the same collaborative and empirical processes, in its current form, the Public Affairs Scale does represent a

reliable and valid instrument. It is user-friendly at reasonable length— 40 items fitting easily in one page— and has face validity. It appears sufficiently sensitive to capture differences between students and within students over time. If utilized systematically, it can assess the extent to which students are engaged with the mission in general and over time, thereby evaluating how both students and the fulfillment of the mission may mature, for such purposes as strategic planning and the public scorecard. At the unit level (i.e., college, department, program), the assessment can be used to describe how the mission is being met within more homogenous groups and to serve as an evaluation of the efficacy of specific interventions or initiatives.

References

- Higher Education Research Institute (1996). A Social Change Model of Leadership Development: Guidebook Version III. Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California.
- Levesque, C., & Cornelius-White, J. H. D. (2009). Further Analysis of the 2007-2008 President's Commission Diversity Climate Assessment. Unpublished Manuscript. Missouri State University.
- Tyree, T. M. (1998). *Designing an instrument to measure socially responsible leadership using the social change model of leadership development*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Table 1. The Items and Three Factor-Structure of the Public Affairs Scale

	Factors		
	Community Engagement Reliability: $\alpha = .90$	Ethical Leadership Reliability: ($\alpha = .92$)	Cultural Competence Reliability: ($\alpha = .75$)
21. Volunteering will help me succeed in my own profession	.787		
19. I plan to do some volunteer work next year	.774		
20. Volunteering makes me feel like I am contributing to the community	.768		
23. I do things for a cause bigger than myself	.684		
26. I feel an obligation to contribute to the community	.660		
17. Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things	.657	.319	
10. I am confident that I will participate in community service activities in the future	.643		
25. Community service is necessary to making our communities better	.633		
8. I know I can make a difference in my community	.633		
27. I feel that I can make a difference in the world	.633		
11. I have worked collaboratively in a student organization to influence my community's quality of life	.625		
22. Volunteering lets me learn through direct "hands on" experience	.600		
16. People I know share an interest in community service	.543		
3. I participate in the political process	.353		
1. I have had one or more service-learning classes	.301		
60. When I am in groups, I am thoughtful of other people's feelings		.758	
54. I am dependable and reliable		.704	
64. I try to make certain that my actions never intentionally harm another person		.702	
57. I am aware of what kind of person I am		.663	
67. When working in groups, I try to assure everyone's voice is heard before a decision is reached		.659	
65. When making a decision, I weigh the consequences of each alternative		.634	
59. In nearly everything I do, I am striving to improve myself and become a better person	.304	.627	
81. I am in part responsible for the quality and quantity of knowledge I obtain from the courses I take		.621	
53. I understand the importance of		.615	

being true to my word			
68. When I am a leader, I am sure to recognize the accomplishments of others more than myself		.597	
66. When I listen, I regularly try to take someone else's perspective		.551	.305
62. When I make mistakes, I am able to admit them		.540	
56. I stand by my decisions even when others protest		.528	
63. I usually take an active interest in someone else's concerns		.482	
72. I try to build a consensus where everyone finds a decision acceptable before an important change is made		.474	
31. I am able to communicate effectively with people from different cultures			.535
33. I understand the challenges faced by people from different cultures			.505
34. I have been involved in organizations providing services to people from different cultural backgrounds	.387		.497
47. In the future, I will travel to other countries to better understand culture and diversity			.487
44. I can easily relate to people that are different from me		.338	.473
51. I have been involved in organizations providing services to diverse populations	.396		.453
45. Traveling allows me to understand different cultures		.374	.434
46. I have participated in a study abroad or exchange program			.355
43. I could not easily get accustomed to living in another country (reverse scored)			.310
36. I avoid imposing values that may conflict with cultural groups other than my own			.292

Table 2. Mean Ratings for the Three Elements of the Public Affairs Mission

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew	Minimum	Maximum
Community Engagement	3.93	.58	-.61	1	5
Ethical Leadership	4.19	.47	-1.24	1	5
Cultural Competence	3.55	.53	-.45	1.40	5

Table 3. Public Affairs subscale means by class rank.

Class Rank	Cultural Competence	Community Engagement	Ethical Leadership
Freshmen	3.45	3.80	4.16
Sophmores	3.53	3.90	4.12
Juniors	3.53	4.11	4.17
Seniors	3.56	4.03	4.13
Graduate	3.69	3.99	4.28
	Difference between Freshmen and Graduates $p < .01$	Difference between Freshmen and Graduates $p < .05$	Difference between Freshmen and Graduates $p = .05$

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Table 4. Mean Ratings of the Eight Subscales of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew	Minimum	Maximum
Change	3.74	.55	-.05	2	5
Citizenship	3.90	.66	-.99	1	5
Collaboration	3.98	.54	-1.21	1	5
Commitment	4.27	.59	-1.92	1	5
Common Purpose	3.95	.51	-1.41	1	5
Congruence	4.10	.58	-1.46	1	5
Consciousness of Self	3.85	.60	-.78	1	5
Controversy	3.88	.48	-.34	2	5

Table 5. Correlations between the three elements of the Public Affairs and the constructs of the Socially Responsible Leadership

		Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised							
		Change	Citizenship	Collaboration	Commitment	Common Purpose	Congruence	Consciousness of Self	Controversy with Civility
Public Affairs	Community Engagement	.386**	.706**	.493**	.374**	.478**	.418**	.401**	.380**
Student Self-Report Scale	Ethical Leadership	.547**	.624**	.688**	.666**	.678**	.681**	.544**	.650**
	Cultural Competence	.570**	.487**	.490**	.309**	.398**	.389**	.404**	.529**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1. The Public Affairs Scale

1. I have had one or more service-learning classes. [1]
2. I participate in the political process.[3]
3. I know I can make a difference in my community. [8]
4. I am confident that I will participate in community service activities in the future. [10]
5. I have worked collaboratively in a student organization to influence my community's quality of life. [11]
6. People I know share an interest in community service. [16]
7. Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things. [17]
8. I plan to do some volunteer work next year. [19]
9. Volunteering makes me feel like I am contributing to the community. [20]
10. Volunteering will help me succeed in my own profession.[21]
11. Volunteering lets me learn through direct "hands on" experience.[22]
12. I do things for a cause bigger than myself.[23]
13. Community service is necessary to making our communities better. [25]
14. I feel an obligation to contribute to the community. [26]
15. I feel that I can make a difference in the world. [27]
16. I am able to communicate effectively with people from different cultures. [31]
17. I understand the challenges faced by people from different cultures.[33]
18. I have been involved in organizations providing services to people from different cultural backgrounds.[34]
19. I avoid imposing values that may conflict with cultural groups other than my own.[36]
20. I could not easily get accustomed to living in another country.[43]
21. I can easily relate to people that are different from me.[44]
22. Traveling allows me to understand different cultures.[45]
23. I have participated in a study abroad or exchange program.[46]
24. In the future, I will travel to other countries to better understand culture and diversity.[47]
25. I have been involved in organizations providing services to diverse populations.[51]
26. I understand the importance of being true to my word.[53]
27. I am dependable and reliable.[54]
28. I stand by my decisions even when other protest.[56]
29. I am aware of what kind of person I am.[57]
30. In nearly everything I do, I am striving to improve myself and become a better person.[59]
31. When I am in groups, I am thoughtful of other people's feelings.[60]
32. When I make mistakes, I am able to admit them.[62]
33. I usually take an active interest in someone else's concerns.[63]
34. I try to make certain that my actions never intentionally harm another person.[64]
35. When making a decision, I weigh the consequences of each alternative.[65]
36. When I listen, I regularly try to take someone else's perspective.[66]
37. When working in groups, I try to assure everyone's voice is heard before a decision is reached.[67]
38. When I am a leader, I am sure to recognize the accomplishments.[68]
39. I try to build a consensus where everyone finds a decision acceptable before an important change is made.[72]
40. I am in part responsible for the quality and quantity of knowledge I obtain from the courses I take.[81]

Please note Item 20 is reversed scored. The original item number is presented in brackets [].

Figure 2. Descriptions of Socially Responsible Leadership Scale - Revised Subscales (Adapted From Tyree, 1998)

Change – believing in the importance of making a better world and a better society through some activity

Citizenship – believing in a process whereby an individual and/or a group become responsibly connected to the community and to society through some activity

Collaboration – working with others in a common effort

Commitment – having the energy that motivates an individual to serve and that drives the collective effort

Common Purpose – having shared goals and values when working with others

Congruence – thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity and honesty toward others

Consciousness of Self – being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes and emotions that motivate a person to take action

Controversy with Civility – believing in two fundamental realities of any creative effort: (1) that differences in viewpoint are inevitable, and (2) that such differences must be aired openly but with civility