

Winning the Best and Brightest:
Increasing the Attraction
of Public Service



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The PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for
The Business of Government

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Foreword

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On behalf of The PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report by Carol Chetkovich, “Winning the Best and Brightest: Increasing the Attraction of Public Service.”

The report is based on Professor Chetkovich’s surveys and conversations with public policy students at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She probed their views on public service and their interest in seeking employment in government, business, or the nonprofit sector. The students were remarkably candid about their views toward public service and the impact of their graduate education on their attitudes toward government.

Professor Chetkovich’s report will be very useful to leaders in all public sector organizations as they consider ways in which to make public service more appealing. The report contains 15 recommendations that both government and schools of public policy can implement to promote interest in public service. A key message from the report is that making public service more attractive is a responsibility of both government and the schools of public policy that are training the public sector leaders of the future.

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Executive Summary

All employers today are engaged in an intense competition for good people, but the public sector faces particularly difficult challenges in its effort to attract and retain talent. Over the last few decades the United States has seen an increasing disdain for government among citizens and a decreasing enthusiasm for public-sector careers among well-educated, talented young people. From the perspective of public policy schools, one particularly troubling feature of the decline of the career public service is the movement among public policy and administration students away from government employment and into the private sector. In training programs explicitly designed to prepare thoughtful, capable professionals for public-sector work, many students are turning away from government careers.

Various explanations have been offered, including the ongoing problems of lower salaries and lesser professional opportunities in government compared to the private sector. These are useful but partial explanations, relevant to the decline in undergraduate interest in the public sector but less satisfactory in accounting for the shift among students who have chosen to attend professional schools of public policy and administration. Also in question are the implications of the trend. Some argue that in a time of smaller government and increasing use of the private sector to do public work, public-service careers will inevitably include multiple sectors. At the same time, government continues to need qualified people, and individuals moving in and out of the public sector will not fully address this need.

What are students seeking in their careers and what can government do to compete more effectively for these talented candidates? Do public policy schools have an effect on student attitudes and expectations, and if so, can they strengthen the public-service orientation of their graduates?

To address such questions, this report takes a close look at the career-related goals and expectations of public policy students, from their entry into a professional program until their first postgraduate employment. The following findings are highlighted:

- Students at entry tend to be uncertain about their career goals and ambivalent about sector; despite an interest in public policy, students are not committed to government work. Career expectations fluctuate in various directions over their time in school.
- Compounding student uncertainty is the common anticipation of multi-sector careers. This expectation, coupled with the belief that it is easier to move from private to public sector than the reverse, persuades many students that it is wiser to start in the private sector.
- The policy training process appears not to strengthen public-sector interest, and may even confirm misgivings about government.
- Students are drawn to the private sector for professional development, intellectual challenge, and advancement opportunity, as well as

financial benefits. Particularly in their first post-graduate jobs, they seek a learning environment that will open up possibilities for them. Many believe that the only government jobs available to them are routine, narrow in scope, and highly constrained, involving little potential for development.

- Though salary is not the most important consideration for these students, it becomes salient in the context of both the large debt burden carried by many students and the considerable salary differences between sectors.
- For those who do pursue public-sector work, probably the strongest drawing card is the possibility of “making a difference”—particularly of having an impact in a policy area of interest.

The study’s findings point to areas in which action is needed by both government and policy schools if the public sector is to compete more effectively for qualified workers. These areas include:

- *Enhancing the appeal of public-sector work and respect for government.* In terms of government action, this means ensuring that professional work makes use of candidate skills and policy interest, supports professional development, makes clear advancement opportunities, and is not overly constrained by hierarchy. Schools can help by providing a curriculum that sustains commitment by incorporating policy substance, taking care that analytics training does not result in a hypercritical view of government, and providing models of successful public sector programs and careers. Partnerships between policy schools and government can improve public-sector performance and draw attention to success.
- *Addressing financial concerns.* Government employers must do whatever they can to narrow the salary gap, including using special pay authorities such as the repayment of student loans. Schools can mitigate the impact of the salary gap by increasing loan-forgiveness programs and redirecting financial support to target those who enter public service.
- *Improving career guidance, linkages, and ease of entry into government.* Government recruiting

needs to be earlier, more strategic, and more proactive; a streamlined, more flexible hiring process is also necessary. As multi-sector careers become increasingly common, it will be necessary to increase options for lateral entry. Schools can facilitate public-sector employment by strengthening their linkages to public employers, providing students with better and earlier financial guidance, and teaching “survival skills” for public-sector careers.

Action on all of these fronts would enhance government’s competitiveness and strengthen student commitment to public service, ultimately improving the conditions and performance of public-sector work.

Introduction*

All employers today are engaged in an intense competition for good people. The economic growth of the 1990s, the increasing fluidity of professional careers, a declining supply of workers in the executive pipeline, and the high skill-demands of a knowledge-based economy have resulted in a “war for talent” waged by those who understand that human resources represent an organization’s primary competitive advantage (Chambers, et al., 1998; Tulgan, 2001). In this context, government’s decades-long struggle to attract and retain qualified personnel takes on even greater urgency (GAO, 2000; Garland, et al., 1989; Volcker, 1988; Conant, 2000). Both college-student interest in government careers and graduate enrollment in public administration programs, after peaking in the mid- to late-1970s, declined steeply in the 1980s (Conant, 2000) and college graduates of the 1990s have been found to hold negative views of federal government employment (GAO, 1994).

In the current climate, even graduates of public policy and administration programs are moving in increasing numbers away from government employment and into the private sector. Smaller proportions of these students are entering the public sector at graduation, and among those who do, increasing numbers leave eventually for other sectors. In some cases the shift reflects a choice to

work in the nonprofit world, but the proportion entering the private (for-profit) sector is also growing. A recent survey of graduates from several public policy and administration programs found that 76 percent of those in the Class of 1974 entered the public sector at graduation, but among the Class of 1993, the proportion was only 49 percent; in addition, at the time of the survey (1998), only 50 percent of the earlier group and 41 percent of the later one were still working in government (Light, 1999). At Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government the Master in Public Policy (M.P.P.) Class of 2000 sent more students into the private sector on graduation than into government (42 percent versus 34 percent).

What is puzzling is not that some proportion of graduates from public policy and administration programs enter the private sector, but that the magnitude of the shift away from government is so large. These are students who chose to enter schools of government, not law or business. For so many of them to shun government employment—at a time when the public-sector talent pool, particularly at the federal level is diminishing—raises concerns about the future of government and questions about the role of institutions designed to train public leaders.

How should we understand the private-sector employment of policy graduates? Is it a different form of public-interest work, a short-term opportunity for new skill development to be followed by public-sector employment, or a decisive turn away

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from public-service careers? Do students enter these programs with a lesser commitment to public service than in the past, or rather with a different notion of it—one that de-emphasizes government? Given the motivations and expectations of today's students, what can government do to compete more effectively for their talent? And what can graduate schools do to help ensure that government remains a viable option in the "new public service" (Light, 1999)?

Data to address these kinds of questions are available from an ongoing, in-depth study of public policy training and socialization being conducted at the Kennedy School of Government (KSG) and University of California, Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP). Master of Public Policy students in KSG's Class of 2000 and GSPP's Class of 2001 are participating in a series of five surveys and—for a subset of each class—semi-structured interviews. Surveys and interviews are being conducted at entry, the end of the first year, the beginning and end of the second year, and several months after graduation. The data-collection plan permits comparison of the responses of individual students at different points in time as well as an opportunity to explore through interviews the meaning of closed-ended survey responses. Because the KSG students have completed their graduation-round of surveys and interviews, while GSPP students in the study have not yet graduated, the analysis here is based on the Harvard group. Details on sample sizes and response rates may be found in the Appendix.

The report looks first at the students' work-sector plans reported at different points in time, using data from the surveys and the school's Career Services office. These quantitative data are followed by a closer focus on the motivations and expectations expressed in initial interviews, which reveal the ambivalence and fluidity in student career intentions. The next section considers how the standard policy training process may interact with student attitudes to weaken rather than solidify a public-sector career orientation. A blend of interview and survey data are then used to explore the question of what draws policy students to the private versus public sector, and whether students who choose the former are doing so with the expectation of engaging in a different form of public service.

A summary of key findings is accompanied by recommendations to government on how it can compete more effectively for these candidates, and to public policy schools on how to strengthen the public-service orientation of their students and support the placement of graduates in public-sector jobs.

The View from the Students

From Entry to Graduation: Changes in Student Work-Sector Plans

KSG students were asked at three different points in time in which sector they planned primarily to work; options included various levels of government in the United States and internationally, domestic nonprofits and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), domestic and international for-profits, “other sector” and “don’t know.” In the first two surveys, respondents were asked to give only one answer, and in the fourth survey those who had accepted a job were asked for one answer (about that job), but others were free to give multiple answers.

A relatively small proportion of students indicated planning for private-sector careers at entry, but a nearly equal number were undecided, and government’s share was less than half of the total. A comparison of those answering the question in both the first and second surveys shows a very slight net shift toward the private sector (see Table 1).

Figures from the fourth survey (at the end of the program) and data from the school’s Career Services office reveal a more decided shift toward the private sector. Table 2 shows the figures for those answering the work-sector question on both second and fourth surveys. (Numbers change for second survey respondents from Table 1 because not all responded to the fourth survey.) Because the fourth survey allowed multiple responses from those not yet employed, the proportions indicating government among their possibilities is relatively high

Table 1: Planned Work Sector at First and Second Surveys (Students responding to both first and second surveys, N = 100)

Planned Primary Sector	First Survey (at entry)	Second Survey (end of first year)
Government	39%	37%
Nonprofit	26%	24%
Private	15%	19%
Other	6%	6%
Don’t know	14%	14%

(45 percent versus figures of 42 percent for nonprofits and 35 percent for the private sector), but among those choosing a single sector, the proportion selecting the private sector is as large as the proportion favoring the public sector. Furthermore, data published by KSG’s Career Services on job placement for this class show changes in the same direction but even more pronounced. Career Services reported that as of September 2000, 42 percent of their respondents had taken private-sector jobs, versus 34 percent in government and 24 percent in nonprofits (Kennedy School of Government Career Services, *Placement Report 2000*).

How should we understand these apparent changes over time among students in KSG’s M.P.P. program? Are students being pulled away from government toward others sectors? What happens to those who are uncertain? Individual-level analysis and correla-

Table 2: Planned Work Sector(s) at Second and Fourth Surveys
 (Students responding to both second and fourth surveys, N = 81)

	Second Survey (end of first year)	Fourth Survey (near graduation)
Government	41%	26% government-only 16% government or nonprofit 1% government or private 2% any sector
Nonprofit	22%	19% nonprofit-only 16% nonprofit or government 5% nonprofit or private 2% any sector
Private	17%	27% private-only 5% private or nonprofit 1% private or government 2% any sector
Other/Don't know	20%	4%

tions reveal that orientation remains consistent for some students in each sector, but that there is also considerable movement in all directions, including students becoming both less and more uncertain. Additionally, though the private-sector proportion is larger at the end of the training than at the beginning, even at entry there is a non-negligible proportion that is either private-oriented, has mixed aims, or is very uncertain about sectoral direction. And, finally, as the next section illustrates, even those students who express public-sector intent on a survey don't necessarily have in mind a traditional career-long commitment to government.

A Closer Look: In-Depth Discussions with Entering Students

A look only at survey responses and their change over time suggests that many students shift their career orientations from the public and/or nonprofit sectors toward the private sector by the time they graduate. But initial interview comments reveal a greater mix of motivations at the outset, and less clarity of direction than closed-ended survey responses might suggest, particularly among those whose responses indicate public-sector plans.

The distribution of intended work sectors among those interviewed differed slightly from the survey

respondents as a whole, with a higher proportion of interviewees planning nonprofit careers, a lower proportion planning government, and a higher proportion in the uncertain or "other sector" categories. The proportion looking to predominantly private-sector careers was identical to the private-sector proportion among survey respondents as a whole.

Among the 26 initial interviewees were seven students whose survey responses indicated an intent to work primarily in the public sector, two at the federal level and five at the state or local level. But interview comments revealed expectations for something very different from a traditional public service career, particularly for the two men aiming at the federal level. Both of them anticipated movement between public and private sectors, and both sought high-level advisory roles in government. As Kevin* explained:

I think that I do want to work in the policy sector—I do want to work for the government at some point and that's an absolute. But I think to do that really effectively it's

* All students names are pseudonyms. Transcript conventions include the following: ellipses indicate omitted text; comments in brackets are not the speaker's words but are inserted to make sense of a passage.

very important to know about the private sector.... I think I want to do international policy in working for the government ... but I don't anticipate something like that happening right out—after I get out of the Kennedy School... I don't anticipate myself being a bureaucrat from the day I get out of the Kennedy School until I retire.

One desirable scenario, he said, would be to work in a consulting firm or a bank for a couple of years and then “when someone gets pulled out of one of those to go work in Washington—you know, they get the tap on the shoulder” he would find himself going along. It would be “a very secondary role, but at least switching into a direct advising to someone who's been appointed to something a little higher up. Sort of like the short-cut method of getting into government.” When he said he wanted to work for the government, he meant “something very meaningful in a policy-advising role ... not just ... reading articles and summarizing them.”

Marlon insisted that “I want to spend the majority of my life in the *public* sector, rather than the private sector.” He went on to explain that “something I'd like to do at one point is be chief of staff for a congressperson, something [like] that.” But at the same time, he believed he probably would work in the private sector for a time “because I need the experience and I probably need the money to pay back for college.” He noted that one of his professors had commented on how “later in our lives the distinction between whether we will spend the majority of our lives in either sector will become blurred. And people will move from one to the other. So I guess being able to have the sets of skills that will allow me to move from one to the other [is important].” He was thinking also about attending law school, but said he didn't think he wanted to go into corporate practice.

... I don't want to do that, I mean that's not what I think I want to do, but also I think part of why I don't want to do that is 'cause I've never had the exposure to the private sector.... I haven't given myself the opportunity to be seduced by the private sector.... [For me, it's more] the elements involved in a job than necessarily the job itself. So I could be a paid lobbyist by a

law firm, or work with representatives, stuff like that. That'd be fine with me and I'd [be] able to have the financial satisfaction and ... the satisfaction of the job.

Though Marlon said he wanted a career primarily in “public service,” it wasn't clear from these kinds of comments what that meant for him; when he was asked directly, the answer he gave reflected a very broad notion defined more by what the work *isn't* than what it *is* (see “Struggling to Define ‘Public Service’”). Neither Marlon nor Kevin included the federal government among their sector options on the graduation survey.

The five other interviewees whose survey responses favored public sector careers (in state or local government), though perhaps clearer in their definitions of public service than Marlon, nevertheless did not express particularly strong commitments to the public sector and in some cases reported decidedly mixed feelings. Geoff had worked in state government and was interested in continuing to work on social issues but was gravitating away from social service programs and toward economic development. In part this reflected the feeling that “government programs I'm increasingly not sold on, and I'm increasingly becoming frustrated with, and find them actually less interesting ... [in] the problems that they confront over and over again.” Although he had found his state government work satisfying, he also found his public-sector colleagues far less dynamic and entrepreneurial than those with whom he had worked in the nonprofit sector. Arthur reported a very similar experience in which he had found an opportunity to work on discrimination issues at the state level very meaningful, but found coworker performance somewhat unprofessional: “I think it exacerbated some of my stereotypes of state workers a little.”

Victor and Alicia also reported an interest primarily in state and local government, but both described their plans in a way that very much left open the possibility of working outside government. Alicia's orientation was driven by a deep commitment to educational equity coupled with a desire to see the immediate impact of her work in her own community. She didn't imagine she'd stay with one employer for an extended period, and “ultimately if it worked out ... I'd probably want to do something

Struggling to Define “Public Service”

Carol: What does the phrase “public service” mean to you?

Marlon: That’s a very good question. One would say the lines are blurring. Well, you know public service when you see it because it’s no pay or low pay. That’d be the first clue. To me, public service means not being beholden—the monetary interest being the height of—the goal is not to make a profit. So any organization ... or entity ... whose goal is not to make money ... That’s how I sort of define it, and I realize like—at one point I was really bad about saying, “Oh, that’s ‘public sector’, ‘private sector’” and making the division between the two. But now I’m a little bit less so because I mean one can call a profit industry who’s not doing its job and making a profit a “nonprofit,” you know, to some extent. A nonprofit can act just like a profit, it just, it’s in the mission of the organization.

that was independent-contracting oriented, in terms of tackling these issues, even if what I did by and large was still work with government agencies.” Victor offered strikingly similar comments, saying he’d like to work as a liaison to federal or state agencies on behalf of local community needs, “whether that came through a consulting role—I don’t know how it would be formulated ... I wasn’t thinking private, at all. But again, who knows how it will turn out.” The remaining respondent whose survey indicated a preference for the public sector was Anna, whose aim was to work with Native American tribes to strengthen their administrative and judicial capacities. Her commitment to public-sector work seemed the most definitive, though she also might consider self-employment consulting to tribal clients. In summary, even those expressing a preference for predominantly public-sector careers at entry reflected ambivalence and uncertainty in their interviews.

Those who were either unclear about sector or inclined toward nonprofits at the outset (half of the original sample, two-thirds of those participating in all interviews) often spoke of the public sector in

disparaging terms. Maria was “kind of disillusioned with government.” Susan said when a college advisor suggested she think about KSG, “I heard ‘government,’ and I was like no, I don’t want to go into government.” And Leo noted that “I’m interested in government and public service [but] I don’t want to be some mid-level bureaucrat in a cabinet department of something.” Melanie’s friends had questioned her coming to KSG because, as they put it, “It’s a school of government. Do you really want to work for the government—you [who] have problems with the government?” In response, she said, “I think if you want to change anything, you gotta know what the problem is. Or the source of it ... I think the biggest [hardest] thing for *me* is gonna be taking a job in the government, more so than taking a job with the private sector.” Asked to be more specific about what she called her “fear of government,” she explained, “I don’t want to be a part—right now—of decisions that I feel like could backfire, or I don’t want to be a part of something ... I can’t influence yet ... And I feel like I would be more effective if you know, five or 10 years down the line I joined the government with more experience, where I can wield that experience and say, look, listen to me!” Those who—like Flynn and Beryl—wanted to bring about social change through political mobilization thought primarily in terms of the nonprofit sector rather than government.

Some students were relatively indifferent to sector or explicitly planned multi-sector careers, usually beginning outside government. Jenna said simply, “I think that I will move around a lot between sectors ... I’m interested in so many things, and I think that, that I’m *good* at different things, and I think I’d like to test my skills in a bunch of different areas.” Her entry survey indicated she didn’t know what sector she planned to work in; at the end of the first year, she said state or local government, but at graduation had taken a consulting job.

Shelly and Peter both entered with a strongly expressed commitment to public service but simultaneously felt private-sector work initially was a strong possibility. Having worked in a hunger program, Shelly felt that she “really had the people in my mind and in my heart” and wanted to do social policy work, but at the same time “felt like going into nonprofits is very limiting.... I’m actually interested

in going into management consulting for a few years ... and then *hopefully* that will train me better as a public servant—that’s my hope and dream, to go back into policy service, whether it’s at the government level or in community-based organizations....”

Peter grew up in a working-class family, took advantage of opportunities for upward mobility, and “felt compelled to ... give back.” He had worked in nonprofit organizations and aimed eventually for “city government/politics” or “the nonprofit foundation track” but said that “short term, I’m considering options like consulting.”

Diana was initially thinking in terms of the nonprofit world but wasn’t committed to it: “I guess I’m not averse to going into the private sector, but ... I think it has to fulfill a larger agenda of public service and I don’t think that would be well enough thought out if I were just sort of pursuing it because it was lucrative, because everybody else was doing it, whatever.”

In Veronica’s case, a desire to work in policy-related journalism meant that she was likely to locate in the private sector even with a public-interest orientation. Darian had changed from a private-sector technical career “because I want my work to be more in line with my passion,” but he had very little idea what that might mean in terms of sector or even the kind of work he would do.

In summary, few of these students expected on entering policy school that they would pursue life-long careers in the public sector. Not only did they anticipate crossing sectors, but many saw serious drawbacks to a government career, based on their lack of confidence in government’s ability to perform well, low expectations for both the intellectual challenge and influence they would have, and the assumption that—relative to the private sector—there would be less innovation, fewer opportunities and support for learning, and fewer resources. Those interested in nonprofits recognized the resource constraints of this sector but also believed it would offer greater potential than government for exercising influence and creativity. Such opportunities are particularly important to KSG students, many of whom explicitly aspire to the role of “leader,” which they define in agentic terms. According to their sur-

vey responses, almost all would say a good leader is interested in innovation as opposed to preservation (91 percent versus 9 percent) and has a results orientation rather than a process orientation (77 percent versus 23 percent). Their interview comments suggest that the public-sector roles they associate with leadership are primarily those at the very top, usually elected or appointed.

In this discussion of the uncertainty and fluidity of student career expectations, it is also relevant that a startling proportion of entering KSG students are either pursuing concurrent degrees or are thinking about obtaining another graduate degree later. Among the interview respondents at entry, seven either possessed such a degree or were pursuing one, and another eight were seriously contemplating doing so; in other words, less than half of the interviewees clearly saw the M.P.P. as their only postgraduate degree. Among survey respondents, the pattern was similar: 10 percent were in a joint or concurrent program, and of the remaining group, 57 percent were thinking about pursuing another degree in the future—most commonly law or business, and occasionally a Ph.D.

The Interaction of Public Policy Training and Student Expectations

Data from the second-round interviews and survey responses suggest that the first-year school experience does little to enhance students’ public- or non-profit-sector orientation. As noted earlier, among those responding to the relevant questions on both surveys, expectations regarding primary work sector shifted very slightly toward the private, for-profit domain, and away from the public and nonprofit sectors. Within the same sample, nearly an additional one-fifth in each survey were uncertain or planning mixed careers. More detailed information gathered in second-round interviews underscores the survey findings. Among the interviewees, half came from public or nonprofit work; at the end of the year, two-thirds of this group were uncertain or looking to a mixed career, while one-third planned (uneasily) to continue in the government or nonprofit sectors. Among the interviewees who had come from private or mixed experience, none planned to move entirely into the public or nonprofit sector; almost all expected mixed careers or were uncertain about future direction.

It is not so much the case that strongly public-oriented students change their views, then, but that students with rather ambiguous inclinations at entry seem to have their misgivings about government work confirmed or at least not countered in their first year of training. Why might a public policy program have this effect? Interview comments and survey responses suggest some possible answers.

Lessons learned. In the first year of their training, public policy students are exposed to a variety of formal and informal influences through their core curriculum and extracurricular activities. At KSG, as in most policy programs, the first-year core curriculum includes a variety of methodologically oriented courses with a strong emphasis on analytic training in statistics and economics (referred to by Fleishman [1990:739] as “the overarching intellectual framework of public policy” and by De Soto et al. [1999:82] as “the central socializing tool” of public policy programs). Taken together, the curriculum is designed to equip students for policy analysis and action by fostering strategic thinking in politics and management, developing ethical reasoning skills, sharpening critical capacity, and sensitizing students to the complexities of policy making. The effect is—not altogether unintentionally—to make students more cautious about governmental intervention (De Soto et al., 1999). In microeconomics particularly, students are often exposed for the first time to the difficult trade-offs entailed in policy choices and the potential for public policies to introduce major inefficiencies and other undesirable consequences into the economy; the benefits of the market are made even clearer. Other elements of the core curriculum highlight the vagaries of political decision making and the challenges of public management—and increasingly, the ways in which the public sector looks to the private sector for effective techniques (De Soto et al., 1999; Brown, 2000).

When students were asked on their second survey to state the “main lesson” they had learned in their first year, quite a few of the responses reported either negative reactions to public-sector work or cautions about policy making.

In final comments on the first year, a few students commented directly on what they saw as a programmatic bias toward the private sector, saying, for

First-Year Students Speak Out

Following are some of the responses offered in answer to the question, *What would you say is the main lesson you’ve learned in your first year of policy school?:*

“It’s very easy to criticize policy, very hard to change it.”

“How to identify better the kinds of convoluted objections different people/groups will have to different policies or policy approaches.”

“Don’t take for granted that you’re doing something that delivers value.”

“It is always wise to remember how little I know.”

“The different constraints in policy implementation and analysis.”

“1. The devil’s in the detail. 2. The danger of bumper sticker politics. 3. It’s all about externalities.”

“Systematic change is slow. ‘Playing the game’ is hard.”

“Conviction despite discouragement.”

“Public policy is much more complex/multifaceted than I had realized.”

“I don’t want to be a bureaucrat—which appears to be what the M.P.P. is training me to be.”

“Really, there are no easy answers to any policy problems. There will always be winners and losers. Several factors depend on who’s where. Leadership plays a large role in this.”

“Public policy problems are harder than they appear.”

“It’s all who you know.”

“There isn’t a right answer. Persuasion is the art that carries the day.”

example, that there was “not enough overt encouragement for public service (an underlying ‘private is best’ trend),” or that the school should be renamed the “John F. Kennedy School of Management Consulting. Not all of us are here to learn how to be consultants—some were lured by the term ‘government’ in the title.” Consistent with the hypothesis that the first year has a conservatizing effect is the very slight shift toward the right in reported political views from entry to second survey.

Students are learning useful lessons when they take cautions about policy making to heart, but if an important feature of their public-service motivation has to do with “changing the world to make it a better place,” they may also be disheartened by these lessons. On the first survey, students were presented a long list of possible skills they might be seeking to develop and asked to select the five most important. “Policy design” was the most commonly selected area, but at the second survey, well under half of the students said they had developed skill in this area; most of the reported skill development was in the areas of economics and statistics. Clearly, statistics and economics are relevant to policy design, but the students’ responses may reflect a belief that these tools are more easily used to critique interventions than to craft solutions.

Construction of a professional identity. At the same time as they are receiving messages about the difficulties of designing effective policies and implementing successful programs, the students also take the analytic orientation of their training as an unsatisfying indication of the narrowness of the roles for which they are being prepared. “While the publicity material put emphasis on becoming the ‘leaders of tomorrow,’” wrote one student, “much of the core curriculum seems to gear us toward being the ‘analysts’ and ‘policy wonks’ of the future. Many of our assignments ask us to role-play at a graduating career position, instead of further down the line (i.e., ‘write a memo as a newly hired policy analyst to the assistant secretary of HHS.’)” Said another, “I ... find the focus on providing analysis rather than or at the expense of providing leadership disconcerting.” And a third commented, “The mission of KSG is to develop leaders for the future; skill-learning is necessary, but insufficient toward this, and KSG should seek to help those who need it to find their focus, their passion....

[KSG could] provide passionate people not only with *tools* but also with vision, guidance, confidence. That is how to build *leaders*. Today KSG is satisfied with mass-producing analysts, while trusting that some will become leaders.”

Some students are particularly disturbed by the message they read into the school’s “Spring Exercise,” a required component of the core in which students role-play government staff members working under tight deadlines on a current policy problem. They are given material on the problem, asked to synthesize it, write memos, and brief a high-level official on issues and recommendations. Though many students find the experience energizing, it is also not uncommon for some to feel uncomfortable with the constrained role they play. The following survey comment was typical of concerns raised by students uncomfortable with the exercise: “Much of the [first year’s] work has been challenging and engaging. However, the Spring Exercise really allowed me to ‘see behind the curtains’ and glimpse the administration’s expectations of the majority of M.P.P. graduates—not to engage in long-term problem solving/strategy generation, but to study issues on a superficial level and summarize them for other decision makers.” When student assessments of the value of different courses were compared by planned work sector, it was found that those planning—at graduation—a public-sector career were considerably more likely than those planning either a nonprofit or private-sector career to identify Spring Exercise as one of the most valuable courses.

Asked on the second survey whether or not they were beginning to get a sense of a professional identity (how policy professionals were expected to think and act), about two-thirds of the respondents said they were. Of this group, though, almost half reported feeling some tension between this mainstream professional identity and their own personal values. Judging from explanatory comments, this conflict reflected the issues cited above—that is, a dissatisfaction with the incrementalism emphasized in policy training; disillusionment over the policy-making process and worry over tensions between policy goals and political or organizational realities; and a rejection of the narrow, analytically focused role associated with policy professionals. The picture that emerges from the comments is one

of an activist-oriented group coming up against the constraints of policy training. It is noteworthy that those reporting a tension between professional and personal identities were significantly more liberal than those saying they felt no such conflict. Though negative comments were also offered by more conservative students, it is not surprising that liberals would be more vulnerable to disillusionment, as they are more likely to enter with high hopes for public-sector activism.

“Some personal values conflict with the ‘game’ of politics (when it involves deceptive strategizing, etc.),” wrote one student. “Also the central role of economics conflicts with my beliefs when the distributive failures are not addressed. Finally, I don’t believe in many ‘U.S. national interest’ arguments.” Another commented, “I struggle with idealism versus reality. The entire [politics] curriculum deals with reality ... when do we think about ideals?” The following represent a sampling of comments on perceived values conflicts:

- “I feel I am less willing to actively bargain with or trade support as required for a political professional. I remain interested in other policy professional opportunities.”
- “I don’t know how well I’ll deal with the partisan gaming that many policy professionals must deal with.”
- “I expect to have difficulty working within professional policy organizations with which I do not share a basic sense of mission.”
- “Policy professionals are expected to be 1) politically moderate, 2) generalists. I am neither—I am unapologetically liberal, interested in civil rights.”
- “Conformity seems necessary, lack of strong political opinions seems the norm ... these conflict with my fundamental values.”

Some students were particularly unhappy with what they believed to be an elitist and/or incrementalist view of policy making. Their comments:

- “I am anti-elitist. KSG teaches to a policy elite with training that isolates policy professionals from the electorate. I think this is un-democratic.”

- “I am not comfortable with the idea of expertise and the role of hierarchy in this culture. Yet policy professionals are expected to perpetuate this system.”
- “KSG represents the elite and their needs and does not care about the majority or the needs of the disadvantaged. KSG focuses more on what is and how to perpetuate a dominant capitalist structure that inevitably relegates the less powerful into poverty.”
- “Many of my beliefs are in changes to the system that are probably too broad to be undertaken at one time.”

“I want to lead, not analyze and assist” was another common explanation for the tension between professional identity and personal dreams, as the following comments illustrate:

- “I am more interested in politics and activism.”
- “I am unhappy that I am being taught to be a bureaucrat at the expense of leadership skills. I feel the two should both be emphasized at KSG.”
- “I don’t see myself in the ‘policy professional’ role that is projected—memo-writing intensive, overly earnest—basically the idea that one way is the only way.”
- “The identity of a policy professional suggested at KSG seems to be one where the professional does lots of analysis but takes few stands, makes few judgments, does not lead.”
- “The Kennedy School has given me the impression that policy professionals are highly process-oriented. I am results-oriented and felt frustrated all year. I also don’t want to worry about money my whole life.”

Inspiration and motivation. At the same time, most students said they had encountered inspiring examples of public service in extracurricular events and coursework (88 percent of the survey respondents had done so), and that their own career thinking had been influenced as a result (77 percent of those who had been inspired said it affected their career thinking). The list of people mentioned as inspiring is quite varied, including high-level elected officials, agency heads, protagonists in teaching

cases and other readings, faculty members and fellow students who have devoted time to community service. The proportion of students identifying “ability to make a social contribution” as a highly important feature of work rises over the year (from 54 percent in the first survey to 62 percent in the second). In addition, almost three-quarters of the second-survey respondents indicated they felt they could “make a difference” in terms of policy or practice, and another 22 percent said they might be able to do so. About 31 percent said their belief in their own capacity to make a difference had grown, and another 52 percent said it had remained unchanged over the year. It seems that the students do not lack inspiration, nor do they emerge from their first year feeling unable to have an impact. But this inspiration and confidence do not link to public-sector career plans.

Motivations and Expectations Related to Choice of Sector

The growing movement of public policy and administration graduates away from government careers undoubtedly reduces the public-sector talent pool. But we are in a time of smaller government, a growing nonprofit sector, and increasing public-private partnerships or contracting arrangements in which private firms take on more of the work of the public sector. Perhaps the loss of these graduates to the public sector is offset by a rise in the number of public-spirited professionals in the private sector. Some scholars make this argument, suggesting that the entry of policy students into the private sector can provide important social benefits, as graduates bring with them a commitment to the public interest, a language that supports dialogue across sectors, and a set of analytical tools that highlight public concerns (Fleishman, 1990; Light, 1999; Stokes, 1996). Furthermore, the lines between sectors are blurry; philanthropic jobs do exist in private firms, and some of the work of the private sector supports public sector performance (such as private consulting to government).

With respect to the study respondents it is too early to know what kind of work will characterize their careers, but it is possible to ask what draws them to private- versus public-sector employment at this time. The answers may suggest both what it would take for government to make a stronger appeal to

more students and how much students entering the private sector look like those who enter the public sector.

In interviews, students did sometimes allude to the private sector as a way to produce public value—for example, in community and economic development projects, socially oriented private enterprises, or offering technical assistance to government. And in the fourth survey, a slight majority of those who included private-sector options in their planned work sector(s) said they expected that work to have a substantial public-sector component. More commonly, though, in both interviews and survey responses students explained their interest in the private sector in terms of the greater professional opportunities they felt it offered: professional development; skill acquisition; an innovative, fast-paced, and flexible environment; and of course, more money (a particularly significant factor given high debt burdens). In addition, because many students expect to work in multiple sectors *and* believe that it is more difficult to enter the private sector from the public sector than vice versa, they fear that beginning in the public sector will unnecessarily foreclose their options. For the most part, they believe their private-sector employment will be short term (perhaps two to four years), and that it will allow them to enter public or nonprofit work with enhanced skills, greater credibility, and better financial security.

In the fall of their second year students begin to think seriously about jobs and often struggle with the question of career direction. Interviews conducted at this time revealed considerable ambivalence about choices, and a very common sense of conflict between the policy orientation that had brought students to KSG and the powerful lure of the private sector. The accompanying interview excerpts illustrate the strong feeling of some students that private-sector experience is not only desirable but necessary (see “Second-Year Students Talk About Career Direction” on pp. 21-23). They do not necessarily think of most of these jobs as a form of public service, but rather as a (hopefully) short-term venture that they believe will “jump-start” their careers.

The argument that policy professionals should understand the market and appreciate it for what it

accomplishes is perfectly reasonable. But the admiration for the private sector that is conveyed in these comments is accompanied by a disdain for the public sector, almost an inferiority complex, that is worrisome. Furthermore, though these students contemplate entering private employment with the expectation of eventually entering public service, even now they recognize that this move may never happen.

Survey responses provide an additional perspective on how motivations and expectations are related to choice of sector. At the time of the fourth survey (near graduation), over half of the respondents had either accepted a job or were considering offers. All students were asked in which sector their job—if they had one—was located, or if still looking, in which sector or combination of sectors they planned to work. Of the 92 students who responded to this survey, 23 (25 percent) checked only public-sector options, another 23 (25 percent) checked only private-sector options, 17 (18 percent) checked only nonprofit options, 26 (28 percent) checked more than one sector (primarily a combination of government and nonprofit options), and 3 (3 percent) were uncertain. (Though the substantial proportion favoring public and/or nonprofit sectors at this point is heartening, note that the actual distribution of jobs as reported by KSG Career Services was more heavily tilted toward the private sector.) What is potentially interesting for this discussion is a comparison of those answering government-only (hereafter, the “public-sector group”) to those answering for-profit-only (the “private-sector group”) on the fourth survey. Though the numbers are small and the comparison more suggestive than conclusive, the responses of the two groups to other questions may add to our understanding of the meaning of the private-versus public-sector choice.

One striking comparison is in the reasons students gave for sector choice in response to an open-ended question. Among those favoring the private-sector, the most common reasons, by frequency of mention, were: financial rewards/security; skill development; challenge/pace/creativity; a desire for private-sector experience; and advancement opportunities. For the public-sector choice, the most common reason was a desire to make a social contribution (expressed as “serving the public,” bring-

ing about “social change,” “making a difference”), and the next most common reason was interest in a particular policy area or program. Comments from nonprofit-oriented students also mentioned the element of service and desire to make a difference (by far the most commonly mentioned reason), but in contrast to the public-sector group, cited as well opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

These remarks are consistent with a number of other survey responses. For example, the public-sector students were more likely than the private-sector group to have entered KSG with a strong idea of a substantive area in which they would like to work (73 percent versus 57 percent), and to have had a particular issue of concern (82 percent versus 60 percent), a difference that was also evident at the end of the first year. In addition, at the second survey 70 percent of the public-sector group versus 48 percent of the private group anticipated working in a particular policy area. In terms of desirable work roles, initially slight differences grew over the first year, at the end of which the private-sector group was considerably more likely than the public-sector group to desire management (55 percent versus 25 percent) and much less likely to desire advocacy (5 percent versus 20 percent).

The public and nonprofit groups’ desire to have a social impact were also evident in the fourth-survey responses to a question about the student’s confidence in his/her ability to “make a difference” in terms of improving policy or practice. Though at the end of the first year, the private-sector students had been slightly more confident of their ability to “make a difference” than were the public-sector students, in the fourth survey the pattern was reversed. At graduation, public-sector students were much more likely to say yes, they could make a difference (65 percent versus 32 percent of the private-sector group) and the private-sector group was more likely to say “maybe” (50 percent versus 26 percent of the public-sector group). Those headed for nonprofits were most confident: 94 percent of them said yes, they believed they could make a difference. These patterns are quite similar to some of Light’s (1999:97) findings, in which graduates taking their first job in government were much more likely than their private-sector colleagues to value the opportunity to have an impact on national or local issues.

The relative importance of salary and expectations for higher salary also distinguished the two groups from the outset. The government-oriented students had lower salary expectations at entry than did the private-sector group (23 percent of the former versus 59 percent of the latter had initially expected annual salaries under \$45,000). Though neither group cited high salary as among the most important qualities in a job, the private sector group did assign this feature greater importance than did the public-sector group (2.18 versus 3 on a scale of 1 = very important to 5 = very unimportant; $p < .0004$). In addition, the public-sector group was much more likely at entry to list salary among the three *least* important features of a job (73 percent did so, compared to 32 percent of the other group; $p < .0058$), though this distinction had greatly diminished by the end of the first year, perhaps reflecting rising concern about debt repayment among public-sector students. Conversely, a job's "opportunity to make a social contribution" was valued by both groups at entry but was more likely to be cited by the government-oriented than private-oriented students as among the most important job qualities at both the beginning and end of the first year (64 percent versus 36 percent put it among the top three factors in the first survey, and 56 percent versus 33 percent in the second).

The education-debt burden is a very real concern for most students, and the significantly higher salaries offered in the private sector are unquestionably an important consideration in the decision-making process, though it is not clear that debt burden predicts career choice. It is true that a higher proportion of the private-sector group cited financial obligations as among the potentially significant constraints on their job choices (68 percent versus 41 percent), but this difference does not appear to be reflective of their M.P.P.-related debt. The average proportion of financial support coming from non-family loans is approximately 41 percent for both groups, and responses on other sources of financial support do not vary significantly.

In conclusion, public policy students enter the private sector hoping to gain skills, credibility, and experience; to make enough money to pay off debts and live comfortably; and to enjoy the resource-rich and fast-paced environment of the private sector. Though some see themselves serving

the public interest through a private-sector job, more common is an expectation that their major public contribution will come later, when they leave the private sector for government or perhaps the nonprofit world. Some undoubtedly will do this, but research indicates that the move from private- to public-sector employment among public policy and administration graduates is not common (Light, 1999).

Second-Year Students Talk about Career Direction

Kevin

Kevin worked over the summer for an economic development project in a developing country, where he saw firsthand the potential value of organizing and supporting local microenterprises. “I talked to [an acquaintance] about his village it basically has a bunch of people working together to produce these crafts, and ... there are these exporters that come in and buy all this stuff up at—I’m sure—cents-on-the-dollar, and then take it back and export it. And I was thinking, you know, there’s so much possibility there for these people to self-generate and grow at an individual level.” He said one career choice for himself would be to work for an international nonprofit in microlending, but another alternative “at the practical level” would be a consulting firm.

I also—when I think career—think very much in stages. Right now one of the things I know is that there’s not one single career that I think will satisfy me and keep me interested and keep me energized enough to actually contribute for the next 40 years. So, with that in mind, I also know that there are certain skills that I can gain from doing consulting to a private-sector organization.”

His puzzle now is, “What am I going to do for a career search when ... the ideas that I have for what I want to do are sort of five or 10 years down the road, not next year.... And if I don’t know what I’m going to do next year, is something like consulting, where I can get the skills and I can get the money, valuable? ... And one of the things I’m very confident of is if I get a job with a top-tier consulting firm or a top-tier I-Bank, I would get skills. My concern ... is would I make sure to get out?” He thought friends would help him hold to his long-range public-service commitment, but then acknowledged that some of them were in the same bind. A colleague whose own background was entirely in nonprofits was looking into private consulting, and Kevin said, “I really understand that and I actually would *recommend* that, cause I think I learned a lot, just in the private-

sector environment I was in ... I think there is a language to learn and a mentality to understand that you learn better if you’re in it.... But it’s amazing to see how people justify these things. I mean I hear myself doing it...”

Dennis

Dennis’s long-range desire to work in city government or local politics was affirmed in his internship with a city office. “I do think that that’s a place where I want to invest some of my time in my career, at some point, in the near future I enjoyed ... knowing that the work I was doing had some immediate impact for the community that was outside the door There was a sense of local politics and commitment there that inspires me I was working with people who were very inspired and committed and smart.”

When asked what he was thinking about for the near term, he said, “That’s what I’m struggling with. I mean I feel very confused about what I want to do next, in some ways. I feel like it would be a mistake to go right into city government. And I feel like I might do it, but as a last resort Part of the anxiety I’m experiencing this couple of weeks is the loan situation, which has just put a panic on me ... I don’t know if city government will pay me well enough—although I think it has the potential ... part of me feels like (.) I want to—I don’t know, I’m confused, I’m very confused about it. The thing I’m thinking a lot about right now is management consulting. And I’m applying for those jobs and I’m starting to prepare myself for the interviews, and I feel like I’ve rationalized it in a way that makes a lot of sense. And one is the loans, but that’s not the primary reason, the other reason is that I feel like I’ll gain some of the tools and the frameworks and some real hard skills there that I might be able to use, that I *will* be able to use back in city government.” He had worked with someone who had moved from consulting into local government and he appreciated her capabilities: “There was just a way of approaching these problems that I really

appreciated, and part of me thought maybe that training is something I will be able to use in a way that'll make me a better city employee or public policy person or public leader. And then the other piece of it is more strategic. I think coming from that world, the management consulting/private-sector world, I might have higher entry points into city government.... I'm thinking maybe I will get further and I'll be able to do more if I start that way versus coming in at some other level from here."

When asked why he was "struggling" as opposed to simply deciding to pursue consulting with the idea of switching later, he said, "Well, part of it's the switching tracks, and I worry about it, although I think I trust myself enough that that [staying in the private sector] hopefully won't happen." He also acknowledged that he wasn't sure he was prepared to do the management consulting work and wanted to find out. "I'm being persuaded by the Career Services office to look at really hard-core private-sector management consulting, whereas I originally wanted to do management consulting that was public sector, and they said, 'Well, if you're going to go for this, go for the very hard-core private stuff,' 'cause they said that'll get you further And so now I'm revisiting that. I mean I'm still going to apply for both, and I think I have a better shot at the public-sector stuff for obvious reasons, but it doesn't pay as well, it doesn't give you as much credibility. I mean there's a lot of downsides to that, too. And part of me now is feeling like, well, maybe I need this challenge to, like, prove myself. Can I *do* this private-sector stuff? I want to see, you know.... And part of me is intrigued, taking a class at the Business School, that the quality of response and thoughtfulness is high [there]. There's a level of engagement there that doesn't happen here in the classroom in the same way. And I'm intrigued by that. I'm really intrigued to see why is that. And I want to understand that in a way that maybe I *could* bring it into the public or nonprofit sector."

He drew an analogy between his comparison of the business-school and policy-school cultures to the difference he'd seen when he interviewed

for internships at OMB [the Office of Management and Budget] and then a private consulting firm. "There was just clearly a difference in culture, in approach, in the way people even composed themselves ... And I realized that I want to know why that is so—is it just this thing called 'profit' or is it something else? And if it is just profit, then we need to find a way to make the nonprofit and the government sector get the same out of people and attract the same kinds of people."

When pressed to explain in more detail the differences he saw between business and policy classrooms, he said, "How I've tried to understand what's going on in the business school is I think there's a certain set of assumptions about human behavior and incentives there that are built off of the private sector. And that's what they're teaching, right? There's a certain way of structuring an environment to get people to respond the way you want them to.... And I think the people who go there in some ways ... buy into those assumptions, or aren't as willing to challenge them, and I think that makes the place run really smoothly ... sort of like a machine. It's getting people to think on their feet and respond quickly and make judgments and be assertive about it, and not question themselves in the same way. And I feel like here ... people come at this from all different perspectives, which is what makes this place so amazing, but then when you put them all in the classroom, I think it doesn't work in the same way, it doesn't run as efficiently or as smoothly. And I think people here ... question authority, they question structures and process more, which again is what makes this place interesting, but at the same time ... it takes a different kind of facilitation here to make that run well."

If he entered the private-oriented firm he was thinking about, he would have no expectation of doing public-sector work, "and that wouldn't be the selling point to hire me." He wasn't terribly excited by the firm's recruiting presentation, but what did attract him was "the way they put out their philosophy or their mission, which is, one is giving the client the best product and the other is really retaining, recruiting, and develop-

ing the best consultants.... And that really attracts me. I'd like to have an environment where I actually think about my own professional development and am supported to do that, when I leave here. And I don't see that happening in a government or nonprofit job."

Jenna

Jenna had gone into the Career Services office in her first year with "this idea that I was interested in the private sector, primarily driven by my concern about my debt burden but also in a real way driven by an understanding that I really needed to know what goes on on both sides of the coin in order to be able to be effective in either place. And the only option that was presented to me there was Big Six management consultants. And I had gone in thinking public relations, government relations, marketing in general, any number of things that I completely forgot about when I was presented with this, 'OK, you have to prepare for case interviews.'" Over the summer she worked in a firm that consulted to public-sector clients, an option she was open to pursuing again at graduation. But she had also been thinking about "the strengths, the opportunities that would be offered by straight private-sector consulting."

At the time of our third interview she had started leaning against the latter, in part because the selection process suggested to her that she might not enjoy the work or fit well in those firms. "So I have to kind of rethink all of that. And I also think that one thing that I'm doing is really kind of questioning, do I really have to be in the private sector? What does it do to me if I extend the time that it takes to pay things off or really push for—it's probably possible to do better than I think financially ... in a government job or in a [nonprofit]—and I haven't really looked at that.... So I'm trying to figure it out, all the while knowing that my hunch is that I may end up in a private firm that does public work but really kinda hoping that there are other options. But also, I recognize that my career would get a really—I mean, what a great jump start, to start in an interesting private-sector job and then cross over. And am I like giving up more than

just the money ... there's a whole idea that it's easier to cross from private to public...."

Asked what she would choose to do if the debt worry could be resolved, she answered quietly, "I don't know. I mean that's funny, you'd think that I'd have an answer, like that," she said, snapping her fingers. "I think that I'm really drawn to the idea of having a position that allows me to interact with the public, in a way that's appropriate to my skill level. I mean I'm not ready to be representing an agency yet, but maybe representing an agency to a segment of the public, whether it's doing legislative liaison work for a public agency or whether it's doing client and consumer and community relations ... I like being a mouthpiece for something I believe in. Or on the other hand, doing policy planning and program design.... But it's all creative. And the problem with that in the public sector is that there are so often limits and you know, I don't think always, but ... I'm interested in ... really understanding whether or not I think this is true ... you know, is bureaucracy really limiting—as limiting as we like to think it is or as we're *taught* to think it is, here? I mean so much of what I'm interested in is, so we're given a sea of administrative mandates, how can we cut through them? How can we change them? So I'm not, I'm not convinced that that's a barrier to the creative process, so ... maybe if I still think I can do that and be satisfied, in a public [agency]—I would prefer ... to tell my mother I'm working for DSS [Department of Social Services] in Massachusetts rather than some company that provides cable services." She chuckled. "But, you know, I also at this point don't want to close my mind and my search to anything."

Findings and Recommendations

Findings

Public policy students, whose training is intended to produce skillful managers, advocates, and analysts for public programs, are increasingly likely to enter other sector employment on graduation and less likely than their predecessors to plan long-term careers in government. Though some cross-fertilization between sectors is not only inevitable but desirable—particularly as we move into an era of smaller government and greater public-private integration—the scale of the shift in this particular population—together with the attitudes uncovered in this study, make the trend problematic. In thinking about how to promote more interest in the public sector, the following key findings from this study are relevant:

- Most policy students do not enter their programs planning for non-public-sector careers, but neither do they have a strong orientation toward the public sector. In fact, disparaging attitudes toward government employment are not unusual.
- Though some students remain consistent in their plans to work in a particular sector, many are uncertain at entry and there is evidence of considerable fluctuation in plans throughout their time in graduate school.
- Compounding their uncertainty over the direction of their careers is the common student expectation that they will move between sectors or at least feel that they should be prepared to do so. At the same time, many believe that it will be easier to move from the private to the public sector than the reverse. In this context, it seems much wiser to start in the private sector.
- The policy training process does little to promote a stronger public-sector orientation among students, and may even confirm misgivings about government among those who enter with ambivalent attitudes. Second-year interview comments revealed a particularly strong curiosity about and admiration for the private sector that was at times coupled with a troubling disdain for government.
- Some policy students seek private-sector jobs with a public orientation, such as consulting to government. Others, however, choose the sector because they expect it to offer much stronger opportunities for professional development, intellectual challenge, advancement (even in subsequent public-sector employment), and financial security. Many of these students believe that the only government jobs open to them at this stage would be routine and narrow in scope, with no room for influence or autonomy.
- Large debt burdens coupled with significant salary differences between sectors are also important factors. Though salary is not by any means the only consideration, it clearly enters into the students' decision-making process and is frequently cited as a major reason for choosing the private sector.

- For those who do pursue public-sector work, probably the strongest drawing card is the possibility of “making a difference”—particularly of having an impact in a policy area of interest. Students headed for the public sector are much more likely than their private-sector counterparts to expect to be able to make a difference and often cite this as a reason for their choice of work sector.

What can be done to counteract the trend of policy students away from government employment? The findings summarized above suggest a number of possible actions that can be taken by government to compete more effectively for policy school graduates and by policy schools to support government in its effort to recruit the best and brightest. In particular, the following areas need to be addressed:

- enhancing the appeal of public-sector work and respect for government;
- addressing financial concerns;
- improving career guidance, linkages, and ease of entry into government.

In each of these areas action is needed by both government and policy schools. In some, independent actions will be mutually reinforcing; in others, more cooperative efforts are needed. Specific recommendations are described below.

Recommendations

Enhancing the Appeal of Public-Sector Work and Respect for Government

Though some students do enter policy school with a private-sector orientation, most come from policy and service-oriented positions in the public or non-profit sectors, and their plans for the future are generally quite open. The choice of policy school is motivated both by a hope that it will supply career-enhancing skills and by a desire to serve an interest greater than a single firm’s bottom line. The first of these motives—career ambitions—inclines students toward the private sector insofar as they perceive it to offer greater opportunities for professional development than does government. This is an issue government must address through the design of work and careers as well as how these are communicated to prospective candidates. The second motive—

a public-interest orientation—is one to which government can successfully appeal, but which the schools must work to preserve, strengthen, and clarify.

Government Actions

Offer work that makes use of the candidate’s skills and interest in policy.

The policy students who choose government do so in large part because of their desire to have an impact. Simultaneously, those who avoid government do so because they believe they will have no influence, and their time will be spent on circumscribed, routine tasks offering no professional growth. New graduates are not necessarily aspiring to decision-making roles, but they are looking for positions in which they can think about programs or policy, offer advice that will be taken into account, and feel that they are making a contribution commensurate with their skills.

The good news is that policy-oriented government jobs that include such opportunities can be very attractive and satisfying, but of course jobs that do not can be quite frustrating. In an interview several months after graduation, one of the students in this study expressed great satisfaction with her work as a Presidential Management Intern (PMI)—despite its low pay—but observed that a friend working as a PMI in another agency was so disheartened she was on the verge of leaving. One important difference was the interns’ degree of involvement in office decision making: The first student had a supervisor who sought her ideas and took them seriously; the second student was more often ignored. In the latter case, government effectively neglected its most important advantage in the competition for talent: the chance to be involved in programs and policy making.

Support professional development and make advancement opportunities clear.

Entry-level professionals are very concerned about the possibilities opened up or closed down by their first position, particularly given the expected fluidity of their careers. Even if advancement in the traditional sense of promotions on a career ladder is not available, the opportunity to learn, to develop new skills, and to be exposed both to new substantive areas and to other institutions and actors are all

extremely valuable and appealing aspects of a job. Challenging first assignments are a particularly critical element of effective human resource management: They let the new entrant demonstrate and develop skills, send her the message that she is taken seriously by the organization, and give the manager information about how well the new employee performs.

When the Presidential Management Intern (PMI) program works as intended, it serves these kinds of functions well and remains an effective recruiting device, but insufficient attention to development and limited rotational opportunities (as well as extremely low pay) can greatly diminish its value. Similarly, summer internships are potentially an excellent opportunity to recruit good candidates, but the opportunity is wasted if the internship is not well structured. For agencies that are serious about recruiting talent, the most important feature of the internship is an opportunity to learn; this means providing assignments that use and stretch the student's capacity, coupled with training and support from other members of the work group. An internship that involves no development is actually counter-productive because it signals to the student that this is probably not a learning environment.

Restructure workplaces away from hierarchy and toward interaction.

Numerous scholars and consultants have argued that the successful "organization of the future" (Hesselbein, et al., 1997) will be fluid and interactive rather than rigid and hierarchical. Communication and coordination arrangements will shift according to the nature of the task, and accountability will be based more on results than rules; it will also be mutual rather than top-down. Changes of this sort are believed to enhance both organizational performance and employee commitment in private, public, and nonprofit sectors (Ackoff, 1994; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994; Ostroff, 1999).

Just as flexibility and autonomy can be satisfying, a rule-bound, hierarchical environment can be disheartening to employees and discouraging to prospective candidates. One KSG graduate who had joined a private-sector consulting firm found herself staffing a project for a public-sector client in which some of her classmates worked.

When asked if she would rather be in their position or hers, she said, "It's not difficult. I'd rather be where I am." In explaining, she alluded to having not only greater opportunities for professional development, but also "a level of access to the top leaders in the state agencies that we were working with that they didn't have. I could call the deputy commissioner of the Department of Revenue up and say, 'You know, I know you want two things for [this program]; you're not going to get this one. This is the one you should go for ... [and here's why].' And they couldn't make that call.... And that's one of the frustrations that people have, with working in the public sector, is it's so hierarchical that a deputy commissioner wouldn't have a reason to talk to an analyst in ... this division.... Whereas anyone from the outside coming in ... [could have that access].... It's totally dysfunctional.... [From the outside] you definitely feel like you're making an impact, and you can see the results when you sit in a meeting with the governor, and someone is going through an analysis that you did and using it to make a decision about x million number of dollars...."

It should be noted that the ability of federal agencies to respond to these kinds of recommendations is partially constrained by conditions over which agencies have no control, such as the heavy layer of political appointments at the upper levels of government, civil service regulations, and other legal requirements. A discussion of such issues is beyond the scope of this report, but the findings of this study provide additional evidence of the need for reform (see National Commission on the Public Service, 1989). To the extent that public managers do have discretion in human resource management, however, they should be explicitly accountable for their performance in this area.

Policy School Actions

Focus on substance as a way to sustain passion.

Public policy students often complain during the first year about losing their sense of commitment and "passion"; they have trouble connecting the reasons that brought them to policy school with the

largely analytical work they do in their classes. The methodologically focused core of policy schools is intended to train students to approach problems analytically, and to serve both generalists and specialists. It may be effective in these aims, but it is generally not very helpful in strengthening public-service motivations. End-of-year comments from students are instructive in this regard:

- “It is very easy to get wrapped up in the core classes and lose track of your career goals...”
- “I’ve definitely been frustrated with the constant focus on domestic policy issues in my core courses ... These things have absolutely no relevance to my intended career, but have nevertheless dominated my academic experience thus far.”
- “I have enjoyed my first year ... I feel some of my greatest skills acquired have been personal skills around time management, working with people, etc. I am very confident that I have improved my ability to do work and have improved ‘how’ I work. I am less confident that I have learned ‘what’ I need to know.... There has been less substance available on issues that I care about than I had initially anticipated.”
- “Core curriculum is very rigid. Ability to critically engage in real, thoughtful policy analysis is limited [KSG is] training consultants and bureaucrats, not thinkers!”

These comments are consistent with study survey data suggesting a correlation between an interest in particular policy areas or issues and a public-sector orientation. A strong motivating factor for many students is their concern about particular policy areas, and though they need to be trained to think about these in a structured way, that training should not lower their enthusiasm. In their regular reviews of core curricula, policy schools ought to look seriously at the question of how the curriculum can be refined or revised to support public-interest motivations in their students. Though the particulars of the reforms would vary by institution, it can be said that enhanced attention to substantive areas of interest—in as many contexts as possible—is probably a major component.

Teach students to be analytical and critical without denigrating government or public programs.

For the many change-oriented students who come to policy school, probably the most powerful lessons of the core curriculum have to do with the difficulty of effecting change and the negative unintended consequences that can come from major public interventions. Because so many students enter without a strong sense of the workings and benefits of the market, it makes sense that their training heighten this understanding and awareness. But a balance must be struck, so that students leave these programs with a realistic but respectful view of government.

In interviews, students often commented on the positive lessons they were learning about the private sector, but rarely talked about how they had a better appreciation for government. This effect came through particularly powerfully in an impromptu interview with a student who wanted to talk about his transition from a nonprofit to a private-sector work orientation.

It was clear that he had come to see much more value in the private sector than he had initially. When asked if he had an idea about how this shift had come about, he hesitated for a moment, and then in a rush began to speak about a number of classes that had shown him a different view of the market. “It was great to kind of see the world through economic theories.... And that was important to me ... to forming my ideas.” He mentioned a class on the reform of political economies, and how “that was very interesting—looking at it from a macro perspective, and you know, what different countries are doing to reform their economies and structure safety nets and kind of the trade-off between efficiency and ... having a more equal system in terms of the distribution of wealth, but not being very efficient.... What a simple, but *striking*—such a revealing concept. So that was revolutionary to me. It was just—it really said something about what I believed in.... And whereas I do think that some things are, you know ... the government’s role is to provide some basic things to everyone, other things I don’t believe gov-

ernment should have a role in. And that was very revealing for me because I just never came to that conclusion.”

A broadening of perspective is essential, but in many students’ comments there is a sense of the pendulum simply swinging in the opposite direction. Rather than coming to a position in which they think, “Now with this stronger understanding of the private sector, I can help to make and implement better policies,” they seem to move away from the public (and in this case, nonprofit) sector altogether. Policy schools should look carefully at the lessons embedded in their curricula and strive for a better balance, with a stronger link back to the important role of the public sector.

The task is not impossible, and it may be helpful here to quote a student whose view was less critical and more hopeful than most. She wrote on her final survey:

As one of the few who are lucky to get an education, as a Muslim, a woman and a Bangladeshi, I feel a great responsibility toward people all over the world, but especially towards the common Muslims in general as they are oppressed by their own as well as other governments. As my education continues, I have grown from caring about Bangladeshis to caring about all people. I have come to understand that building political power for and unifying Muslims is important in creating a voice for us. The Kennedy School of Government has helped tremendously by giving me the tools to start building my career in this respect. The school has also opened doors for me in an area of concentration that I would never have thought of choosing had I not come to this school—public management. Countries can never do without governments; and governments can never do without public management!

Provide models of successful governmental programs/agencies and proactive governmental careers.

Even before coming to graduate school, and certainly in their activities outside the school, policy

students are exposed to a general social environment that disparages government and reveres the private sector, particularly during economic boom times. Acknowledging the effect this environment has on their students, policy schools may need to work harder to promote a more positive view of government.

Policy programs do make some effort to inspire students with successful examples, but more could be done, and more thought could be given to the types of role models that are promoted. Many of the lessons embedded in both curricular content and extracurricular activities focus on public-sector officials at the highest levels, usually appointed or elected positions (Chetkovich and Kirp, 2001). Again, a better balance is needed. Today’s students are looking for entrepreneurial opportunities within the policy context, and are uninterested in work that consists entirely of carrying out someone else’s orders. In visiting speakers as well as case protagonists, they need to see innovative career public servants who work proactively on policies and programs of social significance.

In addition, schools should think about the messages conveyed by professional exercises such as KSG’s Spring Exercise (which is described to the students as being to policy students what moot court is to law students). These kinds of exercises are strong carriers of cultural as well as technical lessons, and if students come away disheartened by the qualities of the role they’ve been asked to play, the message about public-sector careers is a negative one.

Government and Policy Schools in Partnership

Work together to improve public-sector effectiveness and reputation.

High-visibility partnerships between schools and government agencies, along with special efforts to identify and publicize public-sector success (such as the Ford Foundation-funded “Innovations” program at KSG, but also including academic research projects) could contribute to a better balance in attitudes. A related point is the need to improve government performance. Low confidence in government isn’t entirely groundless, and some students speak from direct experience when they express doubts about the public-sector workforce.

Improving public-agency effectiveness should be a high priority in the research, consulting, and community-service activities of policy schools. On the government side, public leaders should reach out to university partners to support their own efforts to enhance performance.

Addressing Concerns about the Debt Burden

Salaries are not the only appealing element of private-sector careers or even necessarily the most important. At the same time, the enormous gap between public- and private-sector salaries—particularly in postgraduate entry positions—coupled with the major debt burden carried by graduates of private institutions, must factor heavily into student career decisions. In KSG's M.P.P. Class of 2000, the median salary for private-sector jobs in the United States other than consulting to the public sector was \$95,000-\$100,000. Median salaries for government jobs in the United States were \$40,000 for federal jobs, \$43,000 for state jobs, and \$50,000 for regional or local jobs. The median salary of the Harvard Business School's M.B.A. Class of 2000 was \$100,000 plus \$30,000 in signing bonuses, tuition reimbursement, and guaranteed year-end bonuses.

Government Actions

Address the wage gap.

Government agencies do not have to pay the same salaries as the most lucrative private-sector firms to recruit talent, but they must narrow the gap. Capable graduates of public policy programs starting in private-sector employment can earn up to three or four times a PMI's salary, not including other benefits. Though the PMI includes some loan forgiveness, the amount does not come close to balancing the scales, and the salary gap is both a practical constraint and a source of hard feelings. Public managers who want to hire and retain good people must do what they can to see that employees are fairly compensated and rewarded for performance, including taking advantage of the special pay authorities available to them. One potentially useful option is the authorization to repay student loans, as detailed in Office of Personnel Management regulations implementing PL 101-510. Although the regulations (at 5 CFR Part 537) stipu-

late maximum yearly and total repayment amounts as well as a minimum service requirement, the agencies have some flexibility in design. Most importantly, they have the option of offering payment increases or renewals without requiring new service agreements, which can make the payment-to-service ratio much more generous.

The program provides flexibility in payment, but not additional funding to implementing agencies, so it is of limited value where resources are already very scarce. The problem of inadequate pay scales and budgets is larger than any single agency and requires broader administrative and legislative attention.

Policy School Actions

Increase loan-forgiveness programs and redirect financial support.

On the schools' side, more needs to be done in the way of loan forgiveness and scholarship support for those entering public service. The Kennedy School recognizes the magnitude of the problem and is taking important steps to address it more effectively, including raising its cap on salaries eligible for loan forgiveness and refocusing need-based financial aid from need-at-entry to need-at-exit. In other words, the objective will be to support needy students entering low-paid public and nonprofit jobs at graduation rather than those who take a highly paid consulting position, regardless of prior socioeconomic status.

Improving Career Guidance, Linkages, and Ease of Entry into Government

Interviews with policy students revealed a great deal of uncertainty and confusion about career direction, and many students expressed a wish for stronger guidance as they wrestled with the questions of how to think about their careers and even—perhaps especially—what to do next. Many may enter the private sector because it's an obvious, attractive short-term option that they believe will open rather than close off later opportunities. Anxious about their futures, they feel reluctant to pass up appealing private-sector offers that come early in their second year. To the extent that other options are viable and even preferable, the students must be helped to identify them.

Government Actions

Recruit earlier, more energetically, and proactively.

Private-sector firms put a great deal of energy and resources into recruiting activities. Consulting firms, for example, send representatives to campus early in the fall to pitch their firms to students, answer questions, and begin a highly structured but engaging series of screening procedures. Through proactive recruitment techniques and early employment offers, they maximize their ability to choose from among the best possible candidates. The relative absence of government recruiters—especially early in the year—their less dynamic presentations, and the slow pace of screening procedures result in a decreased pool of candidates for public sector jobs. Of respondents in this study who reported having accepted a job offer as of the final-semester survey, a higher proportion were entering the private sector than government.

Successful private-sector firms are also good at knowing what kind of talent they need and going after it. Strategic human resource management starts with an identification of the qualities and capacities the organization needs for high performance; then a recruitment program is designed specifically to find and attract people with those qualities (Chambers et al., 1998). Every stage of the process supports the selection of the right people, including targeting, presentation, and selection procedures. Public agencies need to be just as thoughtful about all of these steps.

Streamline and increase flexibility in hiring processes.

More than one student commented in an interview about the daunting paperwork, narrow requirements, and lengthy screening processes for federal government positions. One exceptionally talented candidate accepted a PMI offer at a particular agency, then waited so long for a security clearance that he feared his PMI would expire before he could use it. The agency's response was to suggest that perhaps he should consider other PMI offers, which he had already rejected in the interest of taking this position. He re-activated his job search and eventually took a position in the private sector. In a competitive labor market, with candidates who are anxious to return to work, delays and other procedural barriers to employment are quite costly. They

also confirm the impression of government employment as excessively bureaucratic.

Open up more lateral hiring options.

Enhancing the appeal of entry-level professional jobs may help to stem the tide of graduates turning to the private sector for postgraduate employment. But if present trends toward multisector careers persist and students continue to look to the private sector for a “jump start,” it will be necessary for government to increase options for lateral entry into career positions.

Policy School Actions

Strengthen institutional linkages to good public-sector employment opportunities.

As noted, private-sector firms conduct earlier and more aggressive outreach than public or nonprofit employers, and for students worried about postgraduate employment, it can be hard to defer a decision until other options have been considered (particularly when they may be difficult to unearth). Schools need to work with each other and with public and nonprofit employers or networks of employers to facilitate the matching of students with jobs in these sectors. Some effort is being made in this direction at KSG and other policy schools, particularly with U.S. federal government agencies. But there are also many good opportunities in state and local government or with nonprofit organizations (domestically and internationally) that students tend not to see. With today's information technology it should be possible for schools to connect with networks of smaller and more distant employers in a way that makes students aware of these opportunities.

Provide students with better and earlier financial guidance.

Two years ago a group of M.P.P. students at KSG constructed a “quilt” of poster cards on which all members of the KSG community were invited to offer their feelings about “Why we are here.” In colorful, sometimes elaborately decorated squares, people told family stories, stated their “commitment to give back” or wrote simple things like “Justice,” “Real Freedom for All,” or “Public Service and Leadership.” Dean Joseph Nye's square read, “Our mission is to train public leaders!” Immediately to its right hung a square from an M.P.P.

student that read, “Ten minutes ago the financial aid office told me that I must earn \$103,174 next year in order to repay my loans on schedule. I don’t want to work for McKinsey, Dean Nye. Please show me the public service job that pays this much and I’ll take it.” To this student, public-sector employment seemed totally out of the question.

Some of the students interviewed for this study had little or no idea that it might be possible for them to live on the salaries they could earn in public-sector positions. In some cases they seemed to overestimate their immediate needs and to underestimate both the starting salaries they might obtain (for example, in state government) and the potential for earnings increases. Without misleading students, it should be possible to provide them with information that would help them think about public-sector work as a realistic possibility. It would also be wise to counsel students earlier on to ensure that they have adequate time to think through financial concerns.

Teach “survival skills” for public-sector employment and provide long-range career guidance that supports those who want to start work in the public or nonprofit sectors.

Just as there are techniques for succeeding in private-sector settings, there are lessons to be learned from successful public servants on how to find and make the most of opportunities in government. Policy schools could assist students by linking them with effective public managers and government positions offering the greatest promise of professional development. Schools could also ensure that their students receive training and advice relevant to government careers—a kind of “insider’s orientation to public sector employment.” Such advice might include information about working conditions in particular agencies, suggestions about things to look for and questions to ask of prospective government employers, and strategies for managing careers in the public sector.

In addition, students need better long-term career counseling. It is an unusual student who has a clear idea of his or her career options and direction and feels able to make sensible choices without much guidance. When Kevin (see “Second-Year Students Talk About Career Direction” on p. 21) said, “What am I going to do for a career search

when ... the ideas I have for what I want to do are five or 10 years down the road?” he was not alone. It is hard for students to conceptualize what a satisfying government *career* might look like—where it would start and how it could develop—or to see that starting in government wouldn’t necessarily hamper one’s later choices. In a vacuum of alternatives, private-sector options are particularly appealing, and a stronger case needs to be made for government as a reasonable starting point and for public service as a viable long-term choice.

Making the case for government means making it clearer to students how they can develop professionally in the public sector and what starting opportunities are available to them. Faculty members who have ties to government can be particularly valuable sources of information for students, and connections to alumni are another resource. But even advisors who don’t have useful contacts can still encourage and support students’ public-service orientation by reminding them of the sector’s value, challenge, and possibilities.

Dennis’s comments highlight the confusion experienced by many students. He noted that “part of the difficulty being here ... part of the wonderful thing and the difficult thing is you’re not channeled into a path. And so you have a hard time measuring yourself against other people or other benchmarks ... where do I stand up ... maybe I need to do this [private job] to prove myself.... But at the same time, that’s the wonderful thing about being here because your opportunities are so much more vast. But that can be scary at a time when you’re feeling very anxious and confused.” Perhaps no additional advising or support would have changed Dennis’s choice of a postgraduate position in consulting, but it could have helped him think more clearly about it. And for some, thinking more clearly might enable them to choose public service.

Appendix: Study Methods

A longitudinal study is being conducted at two graduate schools of public policy—the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California (UC), Berkeley. The study design includes repeated surveys of a particular M.P.P. class in each institution along with repeated interviews with a subset of the class, so that individual responses can be compared across time.

The first KSG survey was distributed to the 164 students in the M.P.P. Class of 2000 at their orientation in fall 1998. Subsequent surveys were distributed only to those students who responded to the first survey and were still in the M.P.P. program at the time of the later survey; some students who are pursuing concurrent degrees have yet to complete the program and therefore have not participated in all surveys. As a result, the total number receiving surveys diminished with each round. Questionnaires were coded with a unique identifying number, but students were instructed not to put their names on the surveys, and the names of respondents were known only to the researcher and her assistants, none of whom were students from the school. Table A-1 shows the timing of the surveys, the total number of students receiving each survey, the number responding, and the response rate. Respondents to the initial survey varied from the class as a whole in having a higher proportion of women, whites, and U.S. students, and having on average slightly more work experience.

Table A-1: Response Rates and Timing of KSG Surveys

KSG Surveys	Number surveyed	Number responding	Response rate
First survey, Fall 1998	164	126	77%
Second survey, Spring 1999	125	104	83%
Third Survey, Fall 1999	122	95	78%
Fourth survey, Spring 2000	108	92	85%
Fifth survey, Spring 2001	n/a	n/a	n/a

In addition, from among 90 volunteers at KSG, a purposive sample of 26 students was chosen for interviews. Criteria for selection included variation by sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and political perspective; of the initial group of 26, 14 were women (seven self-reported as white, seven as members of other racial/ethnic categories) and 12 were men (five self-reported as white, seven as members of other racial/ethnic categories). Though the survey included international students, all interview respondents were U.S. nationals. All interviewees who have continued in the program have been re-interviewed on the same schedule as that used for the surveys. One interview respondent (a

Table A-2: Selected Characteristics of Interviewees and Survey Respondents at KSG

	Initial Interview Sample N = 26	Initial Survey Respondents N = 126
Sex	46% male	51% male
Race/Ethnicity	46% white	64% white
Average Political View (on scale of 1 = most liberal to 7 = most conservative)	3.08	3.00
Socioeconomic Class	27% lower/lower-middle 27% middle 46% upper/upper-middle	10% lower/lower-middle 40% middle 50% upper/upper-middle

woman) dropped out after the first year and four others (two women, two men) have pursued concurrent degrees, deferring their final year in the M.P.P. program and consequently their second-year interviews. As a result, the full series of four interviews (to date) has been conducted with 21 members of the original interview sample. As shown in Table A-2, the interview respondents included disproportionately more people of color and lower-socioeconomic-class students, and slightly more women than the respondent group as a whole. Political views were similar between the two groups both in terms of the distribution and the average.

A similar set of procedures is being used at UC Berkeley, where the class is much smaller. An entering class of 44 received the initial survey and 10 individuals were selected for interviews. Respondents are being followed in the same manner as at KSG.

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Chetkovich is the author of *Real Heat: Gender and Race in the Urban Fire Service*, a study of occupational culture and workforce diversity in the Oakland (California) Fire Department. *Real Heat*, a winner of *Choice's* Outstanding Academic Book award, tells the story of a class of firefighter recruits from their academy training through their 18-month probation, exploring the ways in which race and gender diversity affect the entry of newcomers into the traditional culture.

Her current research project, part of which is reported here, examines the occupational culture of policy professionals. The project is motivated by questions about both the movement of policy students away from government and the relevance of race and gender in student experience.

Chetkovich has conducted policy research for state and federal government agencies in a number of social service areas, and she served for several years as the vice president of a nonprofit medical clinic. Before coming to the Kennedy School, she taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and Mills College.

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