



# THEORY INFORMING PRACTICE

4TH EDITION

The Center for  
**NEW DIRECTIONS**  
in Politics and Public Policy  
*Redefining Leadership for the 21st Century*

**CML**  
COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

*The Voice of Colorado's Cities and Towns*





# THEORY INFORMING PRACTICE

4TH EDITION

© 2011  
Colorado Municipal League  
1144 Sherman Street  
Denver, CO 80203





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** ..... 1

## **CCCMA BEST MASTER’S PROJECT AWARD WINNER**

Urban Politics and Gentrification:  
A Look at the Five Points Neighborhood in Denver ..... 3

## **2010 MASTER’S PROJECTS**

New Perspectives on Increasing Voter Participation on Election Day ..... 4

Anti-Americanism in Turkey: A Study of Causes and Effects of Anti-American  
Sentiment in the U.S.’s Most Atalwart Muslim Ally ..... 4

A Study of the Potentially Gendered Media Coverage of Candidates at the  
Presidential Campaign Level ..... 4

Finding a Way to Pay:  
An Examination of Colorado’s Gas Tax and Oregon’s Mileage Fee Program ..... 5

When the Interest of Colorado and Nebraska Republican River Water Policy  
Does Not Interest the Public ..... 6

Colorado’s Policy and Plan: High School Civics for Lifetime Commitment. .... 6

Colorado Charter Schools:  
Understanding the Factors Involved in High Performing Charter Schools ..... 7

Financial Aid Policy in Colorado ..... 7

Hamas and Isreal ..... 8

Charter Neighborhood Zoning: Possible Effects on Use and Exchange Value  
in Pueblo’s Bessemer Neighborhood ..... 8

Women in Politics: The Dearth of Women in the Political Arena and How Training  
Programs Assist in Building the Pipeline. .... 9

Community Enrichment Programs and a Prospering Economy:  
How Community Art Programs Help to Grow Their Economies ..... 10

A Discussion on Local Control and Improving the Process  
for Colorado Home Rule County Charters ..... 10

Flexible Work Arrangements:  
Meeting 21st Century Challenges with 21st Century Strageties. .... 11

Internet Regulation: Network Neutrality, a Local Issue ..... 11

## **CENTER FOR NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY**

..... 13



# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fourth and possibly final edition of *Theory Informing Practice*, a cooperative venture with the Colorado Municipal League and the Center for NEW DIRECTIONS in Politics and Public Policy. In the coming months, we will be asking you to weigh in on what Center research and information is most useful for you. What can we provide that would make your job easier? Do you use *Theory Informing Practice*? Would an alternative format be preferred?

It has been more than a year since the passing of Center founder Bob Clifton. We continue to miss his spirit, enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to developing leadership for 21st century governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and communities. The Center for NEW DIRECTIONS strives to keep Clifton's spirit, energy, and commitment to Colorado, the United States, and the world alive and thriving.

As you may know, the Center for NEW DIRECTIONS offers a master's degree in political science with an emphasis in politics and public policy that has been recognized by the International City and County Managers Association for its outstanding education and collaboration with local jurisdictions. Its focus on politics and public policy can help you and your employees hone the skills necessary to survive in the politically charged world that is local government. The Center also founded the Cathy Shipley Best and Brightest Internship Program from which many of you have benefited in a collaborative effort with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and local governments across the state.

This publication provides abstracts of the master's projects completed in the past year through the program, especially those with state and local interest. As you scan these, please feel free to contact the graduates for an electronic copy of their entire work or to ask questions about their projects. Many of these projects address issues that affect numerous communities in Colorado and elsewhere. If you need help with a related problem, these graduates may be able to help you handle your challenge more effectively.

We hope that you find this publication useful. Please also feel free to contact NEW DIRECTIONS Director Kathryn Cheever at 303-556-5950 or [kathryn.cheever@ucdenver.edu](mailto:kathryn.cheever@ucdenver.edu), to find out more about our graduate program or these master's projects.

Yours truly,

Kathryn Cheever, PhD  
Director, Center for NEW DIRECTIONS  
in Politics & Public Policy, Department of  
Political Science, University of Colorado Denver

Sam Mamet, MPA  
Executive Director  
Colorado Municipal League

*This page intentionally left blank.*



# CCCMA BEST MASTER'S PROJECT AWARD WINNER 2010

## URBAN POLITICS AND GENTRIFICATION: A LOOK AT THE FIVE POINTS NEIGHBORHOOD IN DENVER

### *2010 CCCMA Best Master's Project Award Winner Addressing the Needs of Local Government*

This paper uses data collected from face-to-face surveys conducted in the traditionally low-income Five Points neighborhood of Denver to gauge individuals' feelings on the process of gentrification that is currently taking place within their community. For the most part, individuals residing within this community approve of the changes taking place via gentrification, but homeowners, whites, affluent individuals, and those with shorter lengths of residency are more likely to welcome these changes than are renters, non-whites, individuals with lesser means, and long-time residents. These findings are important because they suggest that the "conflict school" of urban politics may be correct in asserting that individuals have both positive and negative experiences when dealing with gentrification as opposed to the "consensus school" who believe that gentrification is a positive experience for all (or most) of those involved and affected by the process. While some academics assert that urban renewal associated with gentrification is a positive experience for all those involved, this paper finds gentrification to be anything but that — a phenomenon that harms residents via loss of neighborhood character and an increase in their overall cost of living.

*Kevin Coffey*

*Grants Compliance Specialist*

*Mile High United Way*

*(p) 303/561-2319*

*kevin.coffey@unitedwaydenver.org*

# 2010 MASTER'S PROJECTS

## NEW PERSPECTIVES ON INCREASING VOTER PARTICIPATION ON ELECTION DAY

This study examines whether voting on weekends would increase voter turnout. The study controls for several of the most popular socio-economic and institutional factors that have been hypothesized by earlier research as influencing voter turnout. This study concludes that voting on the weekends would not improve voter turnout, and also yields new conclusions regarding the consequences of choosing to study turnout as a percent of registered voters versus studying turnout as a percent of the entire voting age population. A post analysis of the data further reveals that the primary factor in the differentiation of results in voter turnout data is due to the different types of registered voter populations — voluntary versus required. When these two populations are mixed, they yield conflicting results between registered and voting age population turnout, but when separated, results become more homogenous.

*Dianne Bailey*  
21557 Omaha Avenue  
Parker, Colorado 80138  
(p) 303-805-2380  
[bailey.nyce@pcisys.net](mailto:bailey.nyce@pcisys.net)

## ANTI-AMERICANISM IN TURKEY: A STUDY OF THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN THE U.S.' MOST STALWART MUSLIM ALLY

A 2007 Pew study conducted across 47 nations showed that 81 percent of Turks have an unfavorable opinion of the United States — the highest of any nation polled. This paper is a comprehensive analysis of the U.S.–Turkish diplomatic relationship, focusing on existing scholarship and mass-media content analysis, specifically the 2006 film *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq*, the 2003 “Hood Event,” and the Iraq War. Historic and recent events are evaluated through Constructivist, Realist, and Liberalist theoretical lenses. The paper explains the cause of the high level of Turkish anti-Americanism and makes policy suggestions as to how U.S. policy can accommodate Turkish beliefs and values. This work not only addresses gaps in the current literature, but it offers suggestions as to how the United States can avoid losing a critical ally.

*Tyler Beebout*  
(p) 719-339-5158  
[beebout@gmail.com](mailto:beebout@gmail.com)

## A STUDY OF THE POTENTIALLY GENDERED MEDIA COVERAGE OF CANDIDATES AT THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN LEVEL

Existing research has found that the media covers male political candidates and female political candidates campaigning in the United States for the same political office differently. The majority of media coverage of male candidates focuses more on the issues the candidate stands for. Meanwhile, the media coverage of female

candidates is split between discussing the issues the candidate stands for and what she is wearing and her family life. This gendered media coverage occurs at all campaign levels, including at the presidential campaign level.

In this analysis four political candidates at the presidential campaign level — George W. Bush, Elizabeth Dole, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton — were used to study whether print media is gendered in its coverage of female candidates versus male candidates at the presidential campaign level. All articles used came from *The New York Times* and were pulled from the month of October 1999 (article about Elizabeth Dole and George W. Bush) and October 2007 (articles about Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama). Each article pulled per candidate was analyzed and tracked for any gendered phrases (defined as any statement about a candidate that has nothing to do with the candidate as a candidate but instead refers to characteristics, stereotypes, or roles generally associated with being a man or woman). The results for each candidate were then compared to one another.

Due to the unique circumstances of the four candidates, there were limitations within this analysis. Examples of these limitations include but are not limited to: Dole pushing her possible status of being the “first” female president; Clinton being viewed as a more viable candidate than Dole; and the limitation on available articles to pull due to Dole dropping out of the Republican primary race in the end of October 1999.

*Amanda Belles*  
(p) 970-219-5992  
[amandakbelles@yahoo.com](mailto:amandakbelles@yahoo.com)

## **FINDING A WAY TO PAY: AN EXAMINATION OF COLORADO’S GAS TAX AND OREGON’S MILEAGE FEE PROGRAM**

Colorado is facing a shortfall in transportation funding caused by the eroding buying power of the gas tax. The gas tax has not been raised either at the federal level or state level in over 15 years. In that time, due to inflation, rising construction costs, and increasing fuel efficiencies, the buying power of the gas tax has not kept pace with skyrocketing transportation costs. These factors, coupled with a desire to decrease congestion and subsequently reduce emissions, have led numerous states to examine a distance-based mileage charge.

This paper reviewed the studies of several other states, municipalities, and foreign governmental projects, to examine the legitimacy and functionality of a mileage based system. In particular, the study conducted by the Oregon Department of Transportation is utilized extensively. Several problems are encountered in implementing a new revenue source, and this paper attempts to clarify these difficulties and examines the steps for bringing such a system to Colorado. This paper outlines the benefits such a system brings to transportation budgets and also briefly reviews the congestion pricing method as an additional source of revenue.

*Matthew Brozek*  
*Assistant to the City Manager Fellow*  
*City of Wheatridge*  
(p) 303-235-2867  
[mbrozek@ci.wheatridge.co.us](mailto:mbrozek@ci.wheatridge.co.us)

## **WHEN THE INTEREST OF COLORADO AND NEBRASKA REPUBLICAN RIVER WATER POLICY DOES NOT INTEREST THE PUBLIC**

The purpose of this project is to examine to what degree participation levels for water saving programs were affected by such programs along Colorado and Nebraska's Republican River. The project measures actual participation levels in programs against available levels. Additionally, it takes into account types of governance boards, origins of funding, affects on traditional farming practices, and benefits of the programs versus costs of the programs. The results are presented and discussed, and the conclusion that the greatest measurable affects resulted from adjustments to traditional farming practices is discussed.

*Deni Coryell*  
(p) 719-342-1598  
*dcoryell@gmail.com*

## **COLORADO'S POLICY AND PLAN: HIGH SCHOOL CIVICS FOR LIFETIME COMMITMENT**

Colorado is one of many states attempting to correct a growing error in educational curriculum over the past 40 years. The importance of civics education has faded away among lesson plans valuing standardized test results for schools. Civic content, when included, is found amid history, government, and/or economics courses. Colorado is part of a nation that fails to understand what civics is and its significance to the functionality of all levels of government as well as broader life in community. Specifically, schools have failed to account for and instruct students about the functioning of their local governments. Colorado has newly updated Model Content Standards for all of the basic units of education including civics. Implementation of these standards can provide students with the skills to evaluate public policy, including the Model Civics Standards themselves.

This project reviews current classroom practice and active resident participation from different areas of Colorado to determine civic inadequacies and how they can best be remedied. Specifically, the project evaluates and compares instruction, comprehension, and engagement in Colorado's Front Range, northern, south-central, and southwestern areas. These areas were selected for their unique community values, classroom environment, and educational opportunities currently available. Upon identifying different civic setbacks in each classroom and community, the goal of this project is to develop policy suggestions to enhance the civic education and the well-being of students and residents in their communities.

Government and life in the United States are rooted in "power to the people," a core value of representative democracy. Although there is no one defined way to achieve this engagement, students can learn to make themselves heard in political processes.

*Ronald Doyle*  
*Landman at John L. Hunt, CPL & Associates*  
(p) 303-253-2150  
*rmdoylw421@gmail.com*

# COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS: UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN HIGH-PERFORMING CHARTER SCHOOLS

U.S. charter schools have grown every year since the establishment of the first charter school legislation in Minnesota in 1991. With this growth of the charter school movement and the movement's intent to improve public schools, quality becomes a concern. A variety of high-performing charter schools have been researched and observed in the Denver metro area to determine those specific factors that impact charter school quality. One factor that has improved charter school quality — and quality in traditional public schools, for that matter — is school culture. Successful schools maintain purpose through a learning community's support of a mission, vision, and value system. Quality schools also maintain effective leaders and personnel. Schools implement intervention strategies to improve the performance of all students, and increased instructional time is a factor in reducing summer learning loss. Other factors discussed are the implications of school choice and the new movement to employ data analysis to drive decision making.

*Joseph Haynes*

*Teacher, Littleton Preparatory Charter School*

*(p) 720-283-1867*

*josephdawn\_haynes@msn.com*

## FINANCIAL AID POLICY IN COLORADO

In the future, Colorado's economic competitiveness will be predicated upon its ability to enable its citizens to obtain an education to meet labor market needs and demands. The education required to meet state's labor market needs in the coming decades is projected to have a greater reliance on workers that have obtained at least a college degree. At the same time, Colorado is experiencing a demographic shift in the makeup of its college going population of high school graduates, with the projected demographic composition becoming increasingly made-up of lower income minority groups (particularly Hispanics, who have the lowest educational achievement rates). For Colorado to limit unemployment, have a healthy economy, an educated workforce, and all the inherent benefits from an educated citizenry, policy makers need to address these challenges and craft policies that encourage these minority populations to obtain a higher education.

The main objective of this research project was to determine if Colorado's financial aid policies are crafted in such a way where they are functioning as effectively as possible (i.e., getting funding to those groups with the least ability to afford to attend college). A literature review was done to determine what scholars have identified as the most effective manner of using financial aid funding, and these practices were compared to Colorado specific data. This was done through an analysis of three fiscal years worth of financial aid data (Student Unit Record Database at the Colorado Department of Higher Education) to determine if the state was indeed achieving the most effective means of allocating financial aid dollars to eliminate student's unmet financial need in attending college. Originally, I suspected that the state could improve its financial aid allocation methodology, but the results of the research indicate that the state's allocation methodology largely utilized its funding as effectively as possible with only marginal areas for improvement. This research project also found that the state's level of overall funding for financial aid was

dwarfed by the staggering amount of unmet financial need (where funding is not in place to assist with attending college) for Colorado students. This finding seems to indicate that the solution for adequate financial aid funding where unmet need is eliminated for student attending college in Colorado, requires a federal funding solution, which is briefly discussed in the conclusion section of this paper.

*Chad Marturano  
Public School Finance Unit  
Colorado Department of Education  
(p) 303-866-3174  
marturano\_c@cde.state.co.us*

## **HAMAS AND ISRAEL**

Israel and Palestine are two international actors that have struggled with existing in peace in this highly volatile region of the world. History's legacy has created very divisive issues between Palestinians and Israelis. Currently, the Palestinians are represented by two organizations — the PLO and Hamas. Many western nations consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization, and Hamas has engaged in numerous acts of violence against the State of Israel and its citizens. As reported by the British Broadcast Channel in January 2006, Hamas participated in the Palestinian elections and emerged as the majority party, winning 76 out of 132 seats (BBC, 2006). Has this electoral victory led to a reduction in the use of violence by Hamas? Peter Neumann (2005) argues that participation in the democratic process may lead a terrorist organization to give up violence. Other scholars, such as Martha Crenshaw (1995), argue against this position. This project investigates which of these contending positions is supported in the case of Hamas.

This paper explores if the January 2006 electoral victory of the Hamas has contributed to diminishing the importance and use of terrorist violence by the Hamas. Many scholars have examined the political, cultural, and economic relationship between Israel and Palestine. This paper examines if participation in the electoral process has altered the strategic outlook of the Hamas and, in particular, whether electoral participation has contributed to the diminishing importance of terrorist violence between Israel and Palestine. In examining these questions, this project tests three of the four hypotheses developed by Neumann (2005) on the impact of electoral participation on terrorist groups.

*Amalia McCaffrey  
U.S. Air Force  
Amalia.McCaffrey@asab.centaf.af.mil*

## **CHARTER NEIGHBORHOOD ZONING: POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON USE AND EXCHANGE VALUE IN PUEBLO'S BESSEMER NEIGHBORHOOD**

Pueblo was originally established as an agricultural center, later becoming a hub for industry when the Colorado Fuel Company was acquired by The Colorado Coal and Iron Company, creating the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) Steel Mill in 1882 (Dodds, 1994, p.54). Thomas Andrews (2008) cites Pueblo as the "second most important transportation hub in the region and the self-proclaimed 'Pittsburgh of the West'" (p. 59).

The Town of Bessemer was established in 1886 with a land grant to create a company town to house immigrant mill laborers (Bessemer Neighborhood Plan, 2004, p.13). CF&I began a housing division in the Town of Bessemer, where the CF&I Steel Mill was located, to provide living accommodations close to the mill as a response to the “abysmal conditions in the area adjacent to the steel works” (Bessemer Neighborhood Plan, 2004, p. 15).

Today, the Bessemer neighborhood is home to approximately 10,000 people. The majority of Bessemer residents cite low cost of housing as the number one reason for living in the neighborhood. Because of the declining population and interest in the Bessemer area, the housing stock and commercial services have begun to deteriorate, compromising the integrity of the area.

In an effort to address the problem of declining property values and desirability of the City’s original neighborhoods, specifically the Bessemer area, the City of Pueblo Planning and Community Development Department prepared the Bessemer Neighborhood Plan to identify reasons for decline and to make recommendations for future growth and reinvestment. As a response to the study, City Staff and Odland Consulting (2007) developed two new zone districts, the Residential Charter Neighborhood Zone District and the Commercial Charter Neighborhood Zone District, referred to collectively as the Charter Neighborhood Zone Districts (City of Pueblo, Ordinance No. 7659).

Utilizing extensive GIS mapping and analysis, this study assesses use and exchange value within the Charter Neighborhood Study as a result of rezoning to a Charter Neighborhood Zone District.

*Beritt Odom*  
*Senior Planner*  
*City of Pueblo*  
*(p) 719-553-2259*  
*bodom@pueblo.us*

## **WOMEN IN POLITICS: THE DEARTH OF WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL ARENA AND HOW TRAINING PROGRAMS ASSIST IN BUILDING THE PIPELINE**

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the United States Congress ranks 72nd in the world in regard to women legislators — this includes industrial nations as well as developing nations. This project reviews the dearth of women in political office, how gender affects political ambition, and how, if at all, political training programs prepare women to run for office.

This study focuses on women in the United States. The two training programs that have been chosen for review are the Women’s Campaign School at Yale University and The White House Project. These two programs were chosen because of their longevity, non-partisanship, and women-only programs. The goal of this analysis is to formulate the key characteristics of women who have been successful in their run

for political office, identify why women don't run for office, and determine if women view politics as a viable career option.

*Lenina Olivas*

*(p) 970-631-4466*

*lmolivas@hotmail.com*

## **COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS AND A PROSPERING ECONOMY: HOW COMMUNITY ART PROGRAMS HELP TO GROW THEIR ECONOMIES**

In times of economic challenges, it is important to know whether public art programs provide an avenue for economic growth or whether they are simply art for the sake of arts. Even in times of economic growth, policy makers and citizens alike could benefit from knowledge regarding the economic impact of public art programs on local economies. This project examines the direct and indirect economic impact of public art programs. The City and County of Denver and the City of Seattle were chosen for this multiple case study based on their size and implementation of their Arts Programs. The works of other scholars were examined, as were relevant data from other studies addressing similar topics. The research involved both quantitative and qualitative components with data acquired through a targeted survey and in person interviews with public art officials in both communities. The findings show that there is a correlation between a healthy arts industry and a healthy economy, but whether it is a causal relationship is not clear. Suggestions for further research possibilities conclude the study.

*Laura Powers (formerly Oster)*

*laura.oster@gmail.com*

## **A DISCUSSION ON LOCAL CONTROL AND IMPROVING THE PROCESS FOR COLORADO HOME RULE COUNTY CHARTERS**

It is my objective to add some clarity and explanation to the convoluted and misunderstood process of county home rule charters in Colorado. Home rule county charters allow counties to reestablish the organization and structure of county government to add strength and flexibility to the powers of a county to better meet contemporary demands. According to state law, home rule authority is provided to allow counties to better meet and resolve problems of growth and urbanization and to promote the health, safety, security, and general welfare of the residents. However, despite any reorganization of county structure, home rule counties must still provide all mandatory county functions, services, and facilities, and shall exercise all mandatory powers that are required by law for counties that do not have home rule powers.

Despite the authority in state law for counties to implement home rule powers, county voters routinely deny attempts for home-rule county charters. Yet the number of home-rule municipalities increase each year. The last county home rule charter was adopted more than 30 years ago, despite several attempts that have made in several counties throughout the state.

This master's project provides an analysis of why home rule county charters are largely unsuccessful compared to home rule for municipalities. This investigation summarizes the current process in state law, compares the two existing home rule



counties in the state, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of county home rule, and examines the recent failed-attempt in Eagle County.

The findings allow for the deduction of common reasons for failure. An amendment to state law is suggested to improve the chances of county home rule charters to have more success in the future. The investigation of this project also discusses the rights of local control and matters of state/local concern; compares this process with the process for municipal home-rule charters; discusses the need for efficiency in government; discusses problems with voter apathy and social disengagement; and makes an argument for county home rule in Colorado and suggests ways to improve the process.

*Raegan Robb*  
*Senior Research Assistant*  
*Colorado Legislative Council*  
*(p) 303-866-4364*  
*raegan.robbs@state.co.us*

## **FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS: MEETING 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHALLENGES WITH 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY STRATEGIES**

Local governments are under increasing pressure to maximize service and to minimize costs during a time of resource scarcity and flattening or declining budgets (ICMA, March 2009, p. 1). Furthermore, the productivity crisis and increased international competition have led firms to experiment with new structures and new employment relationships and contracts in order to cut costs and maximize profitability (Ferber & O'Farrell, 1991). Both workers and employers want more flexibility, more ability to adapt to shifting external demands — family or personal life in the case of workers and competitive market pressures in the case of organizations (Williams & MacDermid, 1994).

In an effort to help local governments within the metro Denver region, this project highlights changes in American society of the past three centuries and offers an economic perspective on flexible workplace policies and practices. Flexibility in terms of where one works, when one works, or how much one works encompasses a variety of arrangements that are explored, along with identifying the organization work benefits and the cost benefits of flexible work arrangements (FWAs).

*Chérie Talbert*  
*Vice President of Public Affairs*  
*Home Builders Association of Metro Denver*  
*(p) 303-551-6734*  
*cht-denver@hotmail.com or ctalbert@hbadenver.com*

## **INTERNET REGULATION: NETWORK NEUTRALITY, A LOCAL ISSUE**

The Internet has become an integral part of our lives. The increasing availability of Internet connections and the applications through which we use them have enriched our personal lives and undoubtedly stimulated our ability to be more productive. The Internet's characteristics of equality, inclusion, and expediency can be credited for these gains. Amid our prosperity of information, Internet service providers have been accused of distorting the Internet's most valuable characteristics in order to

maximize profits. These accusations have been accompanied by calls for regulations to maintain the Internet as an open and level playing field. These regulations are commonly referred to as network neutrality.

This project attempts to discover what factors contribute to support for network neutrality regulation. Through analyzing the perspectives and interests of those involved and reviewing market data, this project strives to identify the roots of the problem and understand whether or not regulation is the answer. Upon reaching conclusions regarding the problem and the nature of support for regulation, this project provides policy recommendations aimed at making sure the Internet can continue to be an enabler for Americans to do great things.

*Keith Turner*

*keith.m.turner@gmail.com*

# CENTER FOR NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Political Science Department, University of Colorado Denver

## **Mission statement**

The mission of the Center for NEW DIRECTIONS is to develop academic programs and courses focused in the areas of politics and public policy with the purpose of developing the leadership capacities necessary to address changing public priorities for the 21st century within neighborhoods, communities, governmental jurisdictions, and nonprofit entities

## **About the center**

In the early 1990s, CU/Denver's Political Science Department pioneered an all-weekend B.A. program in Public Policy and Administration tailored to the needs of working professionals. In 1997, in response to the request for graduate educational opportunities in the Western Slope-Durango area, an exploratory off-campus master's program was initiated through the CU/Denver Political Science Department with an area of emphasis in politics and public policy. The first cohort consisted of 31 participants. The Center still provides courses at its Durango site.

In 1999, the Durango-based program received the ICMA (International City/County Management Association) award as "The best academic program in the nation helping to meet the needs of local governments."

With the success of the Durango-based M.A. program, the decision was made to bring it to the Denver area, to complement the earlier B.A. initiative, under the more comprehensive designation as a Center. In September of 2001, the Center began offering an M.A., along with an Academic Certificate Program in Leadership, all with a special emphasis in Politics and Public Policy.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the Center's academic programs is its emphasis on politics and political awareness. This emphasis has little to do with traditional partisan politics as generally associated with political parties or ideologies. The Center's focus on politics and the policy-making process relates to the ability of leaders to mobilize resources and achieve constituent goals consistent with the public interest. In this context, politics becomes a synonym for communication and effective politics translates into effective communication. In short, this emphasis on political awareness seeks to help participants utilize the political process as the "art of making what appears to be impossible, possible" (Scheibner).

The Center's success to date in implementing its mission can be attributed largely to the early achievement of one of its major goals: to establish working partnership agreements with participating local government jurisdictions. The Center currently has partnership agreements with the following local government jurisdictions: Arapahoe County, Arvada, Aurora, Brighton, Commerce City, Denver, Douglas County, Englewood, Greenwood Village, Northglenn, Parker, South Metro Fire District, Thornton, and Westminster.

In November 2006, a Citizen Advisory Board was formed for our Four Corners Area program.

This group meets twice a year to offer programmatic suggestions and assistance in student recruitment and internship placement. Current participating jurisdictions include: Archuleta County, La Plata County, Bayfield, Cortez, Durango, Ridgway, Mancos, Ignacio, Mesa Verde National Park, Montezuma County, Montrose, and Ridgway.

Courses offered through the Center are based on a weekend format that consists of two or three weekend sessions for each course spread out over a two-month period. Participants praise the weekend format, the integrative and holistic approach of the curriculum, and the strong encouragement of course requirements to address real community or agency concerns.

Students participating in any of the academic programs consistently identify the Center's focus on developing leadership competencies as one of the major reasons for their enrollment. In addition to the outcomes specific for the subject of each course, all courses emphasize outcomes related to the following competency areas that are considered critical in developing the required leadership capacities necessary to address changing public priorities for the 21st century within neighborhoods, communities, and governmental jurisdictions.

- Creativity and Innovation
- Changing Public Priorities
- Political and Social Diversity
- Ethical and Legal Accountability
- Deductive and Inductive Reasoning
- Applied Use of Appropriate Technology
- Strategic Planning and Decision-Making
- Resolution of Conflicts and Public Consent Building
- Individual, Organizational, and Cultural Communication Effectiveness

Participants in the NEW DIRECTIONS academic programs represent a wide range of demographic, occupational, and personal backgrounds. They include public and non-profit administrators, elected officials, private-sector employees, community activists, and a variety of others who might be simply called "concerned citizens."

All classes are offered in an integrative fashion of instructor presentation complemented with active participant feedback and involvement. Students frequently comment on how much they value the diversity of individuals in the program and how much they learn from each other in the feedback process.

All of the Center's courses are held off-campus and are sanctioned through the State Office of Extended Studies. The courses are held at the following two locations: the University Center at Chaparral located next to Chaparral High School in Douglas County, and on the Fort Lewis College campus in Durango, Colorado.

The weekend format helps facilitate participation by individuals living considerable distances from where the classes are held. At the Chaparral site, there are students making the trip to their weekend courses from such locations as Pueblo (100 miles), Las Animas and Poncha Springs (150 miles), and the Town of Holly (250 miles).

The Cathy Shipley Best and the Brightest Internship Program and 2004 ICMA Award

In 1998, a prototype internship program was begun through the Durango-based program in collaboration with six small, rural western slope jurisdictions and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. The program was so successful that in January of 2001 it was expanded to include 20 placements consisting of 13 jurisdictions scattered along the eastern plains and the Front Range, as well as 7 jurisdictions on the western slope. The sixth cohort of 20 placements started in January 2010.

Participating students receive up to a \$35,000 annual stipend for the two years of the program including full health and other employee benefits while, at the same time, completing all of the requirements for their Master's Degree in Political Science with an area of emphasis in politics and public policy. The program is the recipient of the ICMA 2004 Program Excellence Award for Outstanding Partnerships and Intergovernmental Cooperation for Local Governments.



Kathryn Cheever, Director  
Center for NEW DIRECTIONS in Politics & Public Policy  
(p) 303-556-5950  
kathryn.cheever@ucdenver.edu







