

Full Length Research Paper

Needs assessment for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in international studies with a concentration in international security and a specialization in international terrorism

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Since the attacks of September 11, national and international security has been driven to the center stage of our present-day society, thus becoming a primary concern and focus in the United States. The purpose of this study was to conduct an instructional needs assessment for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. This empirical study, consisting of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, intended to determine the utility of this type of graduate program. A survey was administered to FSU students and Fort Bragg personnel focusing on perceptions of interest in and importance of the program and its subject content. The results of this study indicated statistically significant interest in and the importance of the establishment of this MA International Studies program, and strongly suggested substantial enrollment projections.

Key words: Needs assessment, curriculum development, international studies, security studies.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Since the attacks of September 11, national and international security has been thrust to the center stage of our present-day society, and in fact has become a primary concern and focus in the United States. National security is of up most importance to the nation as illustrated by the fourth article in the United States Constitution, which establishes the precedent for national security. In addition, the nation considers national and international security so significant that it invests to that end the largest single proportion of the federal budget. The Department of Defense budget for the fiscal year 2008 is \$606 billion (Department of Defense, 2007). This allocation undoubtedly shows the tremendous investment and concern expressed by the public and government for national and international security. Moreover, within the national and international security arena, International Terrorism has now become the single greatest concern.

Statement of the problem situation

In order for the United States to counter this significant international and national security threat, well qualified individuals must be prepared to assume leadership roles in order to direct efforts to counter this problem. The demand exists for individuals with the appropriate skill sets to craft policy and strategies as well as execute this war on terrorism. These individuals require the specific and focused training and education in order to be well-qualified to assume these duties. This requirement necessitates a robust education and training function, in essence, the curriculum content, to prepare these personnel. Therefore, before any new program on International Studies and specifically International Security is established, a confirmed need for the program as well as the actual subject matter and course content

must be identified (Szczykowski,1980). A traditional need assessment study is the recognized method for collecting and analyzing empirical data to determine the proper material and course of action. Moreover, determining the content material is an important aspect in conducting this needs assessment. Identifying the curriculum, instruction and assessment meet those needs, as well as insuring a valid program evaluation are critical for a quality program.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to conduct a needs assessment for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. Moreover, the objective of this study is to obtain empirical evidence in order to determine whether there exists a sufficient demand, interest and importance in this type of educational graduate program. Specifically, this study will ascertain whether there is 1) interest and 2) importance of the suggested program. The primary method in ascertaining these issues will be a traditional survey consisting of the both quantitative and qualitative survey items in order to collect useable data. In particular, the purpose of the survey is to assess the interest in a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism.

This study was designed to generate data which would assist in determining the need for this type of graduate program. The primary focus of the study was to examine the perceptions of the potential students who would be interested in attending the program and those who, although not interested in enrolling in the program, but are in a position to provide valuable perspective in determining the value, utility and importance of the overall program. Specifically, the data pertained to the following major factors or elements: (a) Interest in the curriculum content, (b) Importance of the curriculum content, (c) Assessment of the pragmatic issues, (d) individual general data, (e) programmatic data, and (f) overall additional suggestions for the program. In addition, the data also provided evidence regarding interest and importance of the curriculum content, programmatic issues, and additional information for decision making purposes. The data generated will also provide an evaluative tool designed especially for the decision-making process on the potential establishment of this program.

Another key aspect of this study is the receptivity and marketability to Fort Bragg. Fayetteville State University has a unique advantage of being located close to this U.S. Army installation(Brodsky, 1970) . The missions and operations of the units and personnel at Fort Bragg focus on and are heavily involved with many distinct aspects of

International Security and International Terrorism (McCord, 1985). Moreover, Fort Bragg, with 58,000 assigned personnel including military members, federal civilian employees and government contractors, is scheduled to receive an additional 40,000 people with the Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC) re-structuring. This increase in assigned personnel will involve the transfer of U.S. Forces Command with the assigned personnel and dependents to the Fayetteville area (Fort Bragg Public Affairs Office, 2007).

Questions to be answered

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. For each of the groups sampled, what were the respondents' perceptions of the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism?
2. For each of the groups sampled, what were the respondents' perceptions of the importance in the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism?
3. For each of the groups sampled, what were the respondents' perceptions of the interest of the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism?
4. What significant differences, if any, were apparent between these groups, with respect to their perceptions of the same factors as those cited in the first research questions?
5. What were the significant indications of curriculum content interest and importance?
6. What were the significant indications of programmatic preferences?

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study as designed is intended to provide data to assist in the determination of the establishment of the proposed graduate program. The investigation was intended to conduct a needs assessment for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism (Rossett, 1987). The data generated could be used to ascertain whether there is interest in and the perceived importance of the suggested program. From the data obtained, educational leaders and decision makers would be able to identify with improved accuracy the need for the suggested program and necessary elements of the curriculum, instructional and assessment, as well as the

program evaluation for the proposed program.

Delimitations of the study

The following delimitations of the study were present:

1. The scope was focused on the needs assessment for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism.
2. No attempt was made to measure perceptions of members in any other sample population except for the 1) students at Fayetteville State University and 2) potential students at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
3. No attempt was undertaken to examine perceptions of individuals in any other than the academic environment.
4. No effort was undertaken to generate goals or curriculum content with greater detail than discrete course topics.

Sample selection

The selection of the sample was dependent on the goals of the research. The sample consisted exclusively of individuals who were immediately involved in the educational process at Fayetteville State University and potential students at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Specifically, the subjects used in this study were students in classes at Fayetteville State University and adults employed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The study was designed to employ a descriptive approach in an attempt to ascertain the student perceptions of the need for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. The questionnaire asked the respondents to identify important aspects of the proposed program. Specifically, the instrument directed the respondents to identify interest and importance of potential program. In addition, the questionnaire required the respondent to identify certain pragmatic preferences.

Definition of the terms

The following definitions are offered to clarify the meaning attached to the associated terms.

Needs assessment

Systematic effort to collect opinions, ideas and data from a variety of sources to determine the need for any educational program.

International security

Measures taken by nations and international organizations to insure mutual survival and safety using measures such as military, economic or diplomatic action.

International terrorism

Use of or threat of violence to create and exploit fear to achieve a political objective; A form of political violence.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to employ a descriptive approach in an attempt to ascertain the stated need for this endeavor. However, the overall objective of this needs assessment is to provide prescriptive recommendations regarding specific course topics and additional programmatic guidance (Davies, 1981). Two major samples of respondents were asked to answer the survey items. The survey asked the respondents to identify the need for the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. Specifically, the instrument directed the respondents to evaluate the course in terms of (a) interest in the curriculum content, (b) importance of the curriculum content, (c) assessment of the pragmatic issues, (d) individual general data, (e) programmatic data, and (f) overall additional suggestions for the program (McCord, 1985).

Sample selection

The selection of the sample was dependent on the goals of the research. The sample consisted exclusively of individuals who were students in classes at Fayetteville State University and adults employed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The sample consisted of 148 FSU students and 81 personnel employed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The FSU responses were from five separate groups: four introductory History courses, four introductory Political Science courses, Air Force ROTC courses, Army ROTC courses, and two senior Political Science courses.

Instrument

The survey or instrument used was developed specifically for this research and consisted of quantitative and qualitative items. The questionnaire was administered at Fayetteville State University and Fort Bragg, North Carolina during the months of September and October 2007 (Larson, 1970).

The questionnaire has several demographic items which were modified for the research setting. The major portions of the instrument consist of 1) General Items, 2) Subject Content Importance, 3) Subject Content Interest, 4) Program Interest, and 5) three qualitative items in the form of questions. Most of the survey requests the respondent to address the items in a Likert-type scale. The final portion of the survey consists of a narrative answer section with open-ended responses. For example, the respondents are requested to add any additional comments regarding suggested content subject matter / topic areas. Pertinent information regarding the survey is set forth in the more detailed Final Report.

Senior government interviews

A number of interviews were conducted with senior government

officials regarding the proposal for establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. Additionally, these officials were asked to comment on the proposed content and subject matter for the program. Retired and former officers were also interviewed regarding this proposal. Due to the restrictions on evaluating, commenting on and endorsing such programs by these individuals, the resulting data from these consultations is omitted from this report. However, the general consensus and results from these interviews exhibited and confirmed positive, supportive and encouraging proclivities regarding the program.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed to determine what the participants' responses indicated. Specifically, data were examined to ascertain the certain general items, subject content importance, subject content interest, program interest, and qualitative items. The information obtained from the questionnaire was conducive to the use of descriptive statistics. Calculations were in the form of percentages of responses to selected items. Tables to reflect the mean and standard deviation of responses of members in two classes or groups were devised. Significance tests of the differences between means also were completed.

Methodological assumptions

The following methodological assumptions were considered implicit in this investigation:

1. The sample of respondents was sufficiently representative of the population to permit a reasonable degree of generalization of findings.
2. The participants answered accurately and honestly the items on the questionnaire.
3. The reliability and validity of the instrument used were sufficient to permit an accurate description and analysis of the resulting data.
4. The data collected were interpreted fairly and accurately.
5. The design and sampling procedures were appropriate to the intent of the investigation.

Limitations of the study

The following are the limitations of the study:

1. The degree of cooperation given by the survey administrators and individual respondents would necessarily affect the outcome of this study.
2. Selections of topics covered represented only broad categories of curriculum content in the form of interest and importance.
3. To the degree that any statistical assumptions were not met, the validity of the investigation was limited.

Analysis and interpretation of results

The findings are reported and interpreted within the framework of the six research questions set forth earlier. Detailed summary of the analysis and interpretation of results are found in the Summary of the Study section of the Final Report.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY PURPOSES

The main purpose of this investigation was to obtain data relative to determining the need for the inauguration and establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. The investigation proposed to reveal respondents' perceptions of the need for establishment of the stated graduate program. Moreover, this needs assessment intended to collect data to ascertain specific and discreet subject matter and curriculum content for this proposed new program. The generated data were intended to assist in the determination of the need for the establishment of this advanced educational program.

Ultimately these data were intended as an evaluative tool to assist educational decision makers, curriculum planners and developers, course instructors, material publishers, and professional counselors who would be actively involved in the instructional process of the formulation of a new Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism. The sample consisted of 143 Fayetteville State University students and 81 personnel employed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Table 1 in the Final Report shows the combined FSU and Ft Bragg responses to Importance and Interest items and includes the means and standard deviation for scores depicted for the identified information.

For these two samples of respondents, six specific purposes of the study were stated as follows:

1. For each of the groups sampled, what were the respondents' perceptions of the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism?

Some of the significant results of the survey included: Over half of the combined FSU respondents indicated interest in completing a Masters degree.

While respondents at Ft Bragg indicated a significant percentage of graduate work completion, the interest in enrollment and completion of the proposed Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism is significant.

2. For each of the groups sampled, what were the respondents' perceptions of the Importance of the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism?

According to the survey results:

FSU respondents indicated lower Importance in the following courses: Theories in International Relations; International Politics; Comparative Foreign Policy; International Economics; Transnational Militant-Extremism: Regional Studies; and Research Methods in

International Studies.

Respondents from FSU indicated higher Importance in the following courses: US National Security Policy; International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Political Violence and Insurgency; and Foundations of International Terrorism. Respondents from Ft Bragg indicated lower Importance in the following courses: Theories in International Relations; International Economics; International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Special Topics: Dynamics of Global Terrorism - al Qaeda; and Research Methods in International Studies.

Ft Bragg respondents indicated higher Importance in the following courses: International Politics; U.S. Foreign Policy; Emerging International Security Threats; U.S. National Security Policy; Political Violence and Insurgency; Foundations of International Terrorism; Operational Aspects of International Terrorism; Transnational Militant-Extremism: Regional Studies; Countering Terrorism: Policies, Procedures, and Perspectives. Data found in the appendix provides more complete details.

3. For each of the groups sampled, what were the respondents' perceptions of the Interest in the establishment of a Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism?

According to the survey results:

FSU respondents indicated lower Interest in the following courses: Theories in International Relations; International Economics; and Research Methods in International Studies.

Respondents from FSU indicated higher Interest in the following courses: US Foreign Policy; Emerging International Security Threats; US National Security Policy; International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Political Violence and Insurgency; Foundations of International Terrorism; Operational Aspects of International Terrorism; Countering Terrorism: Policies, Procedures, and Perspectives.

Respondents from Ft Bragg indicated lower Interest in the following courses: Comparative Foreign Policy; International Economics; U.S. National Security Policy; International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; and Research Methods in International Studies. Ft Bragg respondents indicated higher Interest in the following courses: Theories in International Relations; U.S. Foreign Policy; Emerging International Security Threats; Political Violence and Insurgency; Foundations of International Terrorism; Operational Aspects of International Terrorism; Transnational Militant-Extremism: Regional Studies; Countering Terrorism: Policies, Procedures, and Perspectives; and Special Topics: Dynamics of Global Terrorism - al Qaeda. Data found in the appendix provides more complete details.

4. What significant differences, if any, were apparent between these groups, with respect to their perceptions

of the same factors as those cited in the first research questions?

Survey results data suggest significant differences in the two major sample groups of FSU and Ft Bragg regarding respondent's perceptions. Comparison between responses indicates a significantly higher interest in the proposed program from the Ft Bragg sample than from the FSU sample. In fact, in all fourteen categories of subject content except one, International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; the Ft Bragg respondents indicated a significantly higher interest in the program than the FSU respondents. Relative to the importance of the various items, the respondents from the two groups also showed a significant difference, although less pronounced than the interest. Again, the results of the level of importance were stronger with the Ft Bragg sample than with the FSU sample. Specifically, the Ft Bragg sample indicated higher importance for seven of the items, lower for three items and equal in three items.

Another significant finding from the survey analysis and results is the clear pattern of level of responses. In other words, the results clearly indicate a relationship between the responses and the sample group. Specifically, this pattern consists of graduated increases in both the level of importance and interest in the following order (lowest to highest): History and Political Science courses, Air Force and Army ROTC courses, senior courses and finally the Ft Bragg respondents. This corresponds to the expected level of education and maturity on the part of the respondents.

5. What were the significant indications of curriculum content interest and importance?

According to the survey results:

Respondents from the combined samples indicated higher Interest in the following courses: U.S. Foreign Policy; Emerging International Security Threats; U.S. National Security Policy; International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Political Violence and Insurgency; Foundations of International Terrorism; Operational Aspects of International Terrorism; Countering Terrorism: Policies, Procedures, and Perspectives; Theories in International Relations; Operational Aspects of International Terrorism; Transnational Militant-Extremism: Regional Studies; and Special Topics: Dynamics of Global Terrorism - al Qaeda.

Respondents from the combined samples indicated higher Importance in the following courses: US National Security Policy; International Weapons Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Political Violence and Insurgency; and Foundations of International Terrorism; International Politics; U.S. Foreign Policy; Emerging International Security Threats; Operational Aspects of International Terrorism; Transnational Militant-Extremism: Regional Studies; and Countering Terrorism: Policies, Procedures, and Perspectives.

6. What were the significant indications of programmatic

preferences?

As with the importance and interest items, the response scores for the programmatic interest are also varied by sample groups. The levels of feedback again were significantly higher for the Ft Bragg sample than for the FSU sample. Moreover, the FSU level of response followed an earlier identified pattern of graduated increase in the following order (lowest to highest): History and Political Science courses, Air Force and Army ROTC courses, senior courses and, finally, the Ft Bragg respondents. This corresponds, once again, to the expected level of education and maturity on the part of the respondents.

The sample consisted of 148 Fayetteville State University students and 81 personnel employed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The voluntary participation occurred during class, work and off-time.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the data involved the following calculations:

1. The mean and standard deviation of summated points on each of the given factors of the various groups.
2. The means of each of the groups and normative population for each of the factors.
3. The percentage frequencies of responses of the questions regarding certain general items, subject content importance, subject content interest, program interest, and qualitative items.
4. The frequencies and percentages of the identified factors for each of the groups.

Several statistical analyses were conducted with the quantitative data of the survey groups. The t-test and Cronbach test of reliability of the summative scales were conducted. The analysis showed no significant differences and found groups internally consistent, thus reliable.

Selected findings

The following outcomes may be summarized:

1. Statistically significant differences occurred in the various groups as featured in previous discussion as to content importance, content interest and program preference.
2. According the survey data analysis, significant interest exists with the FSU students and Ft Bragg personnel in a new Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism.
3. The response levels for the different categories were universally higher with the Ft Bragg sample.

Conclusions

The following conclusions evolved from the data analysis:

1. Responses reveal statistically significant differences for various groups as to content importance, content interest and program preference.
2. The empirical research data analysis strongly suggests significant interest in the proposed program of a new Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism.
3. The research data also provides valuable information for the program academic development.
4. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis strongly suggests substantial enrollment projections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered:

1. Valuable information about subject content (found in the appendix) which has serious implications for curriculum development which should be capitalized on for program development.
2. The proposed program of a new Masters of Arts program in International Studies with a concentration in International Security and a specialization in International Terrorism should be initiated and scheduled as soon as practical with the suggested start date of the Fall 2008 semester.
3. Follow-on research could provide additional useful data on this proposal and associated development of curriculum, instruction, assessment and program evaluation efforts.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Additional research could provide data on potential FSU and Ft Bragg students, which could be used for instructional and programmatic development and evaluation (Bedwell, 1984). With this empirical data, a precise curriculum should be developed to reflect the findings of this research. These data were intended as an evaluative tool to assist educational decision makers, curriculum planners and developers, course instructors, material publishers, and professional counselors who would be actively involved in the instructional process of the formulation of a new Masters of Arts program.

Appendix: Subject Content Importance / Interest (M / SD)

<u>FSU Importance</u>	<u>Ft Bragg Importance</u>	<u>SI</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>SI</u>	<u>FSU Interest</u>	<u>Ft Bragg Interest</u>
3.8 / 1.0	4.2 / 0.9	7.	Theories in IR	22.	3.4 / 1.2	3.9 / 1.0
4.0 / 1.0	4.0 / 1.0	8.	International Politics	23.	3.4 / 1.2	4.1 / 1.0
3.9 / 1.0	3.9 / 1.0	9.	Comparative Foreign Policy	24.	3.3 / 1.1	4.0 / 0.9
4.1 / 0.9	4.2 / 1.0	10.	US Foreign Policy	25.	3.7 / 1.2	4.1 / 0.9
4.2 / 0.9	4.5 / 0.7	11.	Emerging Threats	26.	3.7 / 1.1	4.3 / 0.8
3.8 / 0.9	3.8 / 0.9	12.	International Economics	27.	3.4 / 1.2	3.8 / 1.0
4.2 / 0.9	3.9 / 1.0	13.	US National Security Policy	28.	3.9 / 1.1	4.1 / 0.9
4.2 / 0.8	3.6 / 1.0	14.	Weapons Proliferation	29.	3.8 / 1.1	3.7 / 1.1
4.1 / 0.9	4.3 / 0.7	15.	Political Violence	30.	3.8 / 1.1	4.5 / 0.7
4.2 / 0.9	4.4 / 0.8	16.	Foundations	31.	3.8 / 1.2	4.2 / 1.0
4.1 / 1.0	4.1 / 0.9	17.	Operational Aspects	32.	3.7 / 1.1	4.1 / 1.0
3.9 / 0.9	4.1 / 0.9	18.	Regional Studies	33.	3.5 / 1.1	4.1 / 1.0
4.2 / 0.9	4.1 / 0.9	19.	Countering Terrorism	34.	3.7 / 1.2	4.1 / 1.1
4.0 / 1.0	4.0 / 0.9	20.	al Qaeda	35.	3.7 / 1.2	3.8 / 1.3
3.8 / 1.0	3.9 / 0.9	21.	Research Methods	36.	3.4 / 1.2	3.5 / 1.3

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